

# U.S. Department of Transportation

# news:



Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20590

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT, TO THE ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, SEPTEMBER 13, 1980

As a former mayor it is always a particular pleasure for me to visit with mayors and municipal officials. For I believe there is no job more rewarding, more challenging, or more enjoyable than that held by locally elected officials. Moreover, the mayors and municipal officials around this country in cities and communities of all sizes and in all regions share a special kinship and special bond. Anyone who has sat where you now sit must understand and appreciate what the cities, towns, and villages of America mean to this country.

Increasingly, America is becoming a nation of cities, of municipalities, of neighborhoods and communities such as those you represent. And increasingly, the values of America and Americans are finding their expression in your communities.

For our people, cities and towns are the places of work, of neighborhoods, of security and opportunity. They are home and they are hope.

They are all the more important -- and the jobs you do in leading them are made all the more important -- when change is in the air.

Today our country is in the midst of a period of unprecedented change, a time of transition that tests not only our resources but our commitment as well.

In a few short years we have seen changes in the world that have shaken the assumptions of decades here at home.

We have witnessed a fundamental shift in the world's energy reality. We have seen a basic reorientation of the international economy.

We have seen, as well, those changes around the world reflected here at home -- and most particularly in the communities that you represent.

The lessons of the world are being learned by the federal government but no less so by the communities and neighborhoods of Illinois.

Those lessons are clear: we cannot afford to be reliant on foreign sources of oil, for energy is becoming more scarce and more expensive.

We cannot afford wasteful habits; we cannot waste our wealth any more than we can waste energy.

We must instead embrace an ethic of national conservation -- one which seeks to increase our country's productivity and efficiency while holding fast to our long-standing national commitments to self-reliance and competition.

The test of our ability to guide our country through this period of transition will come not in Washington but in your communities.

It will be measured by the relationship that we build between the federal and local governments and between the public and private sectors.

For if we are to succeed in preserving that which we value we must construct a working partnership that binds all of us together in this effort.

When I was mayor of Portland I witnessed this administration's efforts to build such a partnership. Now as a member of the Cabinet, I seek to further those efforts -- work that finds expression in the President's urban policy as well as in the rural and small communities policy which is now under discussion. It is an effort to write a charter to guide the federal-local relationship in a constructive course governed by the following principles:

First, national policy must proceed from a process of consultation with those who are affected by that policy. Whether we are talking about new highway legislation or the revitalization of our railroads, the fact remains that the communities affected by the decisions in these and other areas know best what their needs are and, in many instances, how best to meet them. We have sought and we will continue to seek your participation and advice in developing the programs that ultimately must serve you.

Second, this administration is committed to making decisions. Where local communities find themselves looking to the federal government for approval of a project or a program I do not believe that we do you a service by refusing to make a decision -- even where you may not like the decision. As a former mayor, I can tell you I always preferred having an answer, even if the answer was "no", to having no answer at all. As far as the Department of Transportation is concerned, indecision is an enemy that robs us of resources as well as time.

Third, we must eliminate waste wherever we find it. The time has passed when we could afford to build unnecessary projects of any kind. As we seek to revitalize our nation's economy, to respond to the needs of our people for efficient transportation, sound housing, safe neighborhoods, and the other demands which you face daily as local leaders, we must seek to use our nation's resources wisely. In this effort there is no room for waste.

Fourth, we must think strategically both at the local level and nationally. We must invest in strategies rather than in one-dimensional solutions. We must seek solutions which address more than one problem and create more than one opportunity. For by so doing we multiply the work we can accomplish with limited resources and find creative ways to tie together separate pieces into a comprehensive package. In this way our transportation system can become a tool for energy conservation as well as economic development; our economic development strategies assist in the area of human resources and environmental improvement, and so on. If we look for the connections between projects, we can begin to build a self-reinforcing mesh that spreads benefits across the community.

We embrace these principles for the decade of the '80's because of the importance and scale of the work that faces us. In the remainder of this century we seek the reassertion of America's international economic preeminence in the world and the reflection of that position here at home -- in the jobs and opportunities for Americans that will be created.

To accomplish this will require nothing less than the reconstruction of our national transportation system -- for our transportation system represents the arteries of commerce for the country, the means of moving the goods that move the economy.

In virtually every element of that transportation system we are facing significant demands. There is no more telling example of this than our national highway network. Our Interstate highway system is this country's largest capital investment, worth more than one trillion dollars. That system is 93 percent complete and the last seven percent of that system is projected to cost more to build than the original 93 percent. Moreover each year 2,000 miles of Interstate roads need to be rebuilt. We estimate the costs of repair and rehabilitation at 90 billion dollars over the next 10 years.

At the same time we face enormous needs to repair our nation's bridges, as well as the routine but costly resurfacing and rehabilitation of highways around the country. The irony of the situation is that we face these needs at a time when we are forecasting declining revenues in the highway trust fund.

Fuel-efficient cars and a diminished rate of travel have reduced the flow of dollars into the highway trust fund, while inflation has eroded the purchasing power of those dollars. This year we are spending more from that fund than we are taking in.

We are now in the process of developing a new highway bill to respond to this problem. But this is only one component of the challenge. In the decade ahead we are seeking to expand mass transit with expenditures of \$50 billion -- more than three times the money spent in the '70's.

We will work in partnership with the nation's railroads seeking to electrify the main lines so that crops and goods can move swiftly and efficiently to market -- and without the use of foreign oil.

We will work to eliminate the bottlenecks in our transportation system that hinder the movement of goods and wastefully increase costs.

We are already at work with the automobile industry and the industries that support it to return those fundamental American companies to full competitive health.

For we believe that the health and vitality of the communities in this country are linked to the health and vitality of our country's economy. And we believe that the transportation system can play a vital role in weaving together a national economic strategy for this decade that will meet our national goals for jobs, for safe and liveable communities, and for energy security as well.

Before us is the challenge -- of rebuilding our nation's transportation system, and doing it in a way that reinforces the liveability of the cities and towns of America. It is the challenge of returning to our old national habits -- of efficiency and productivity, of self-reliance and self-restraint, of competition and pride in the quality of what we produce.

This is work that, in many instances, is already underway. In transportation alone, with the reform of the regulations that had throttled our trucking and railroad industries, we are witnessing a fresh breeze of competitive revival. The transit goals we have set for this decade hold out the promise of a continued reduction in our reliance on foreign oil. And the pioneer work we have begun to create a new cooperative relationship with the auto industry is our best opportunity to return that industry to full competitive health.

Now the test is whether we can finish the tasks we have set for ourselves.

I believe that we have the resources to do it -- the technology, the workers, and the rest. The question that remains is one of commitment and cooperation -- our willingness to blend our special interests for the sake of the national interest, and thereby achieve for each of us what is needed by all of us.

It was the great Illinois writer and historian Carl Sandburg who wrote, "Rest is not a word of free peoples." And so it is for us. Before us is much work to be done, the hard work that has always been the anvil of America's freedom. I am confident that, working together, we can master these tasks -- and I am eager to work with you to do just that.