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TALKING POINTS PREPARED FOR U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT, RIDESHARING CEO BRIEFING, PITTSBURGH, PA.
MAY 12, 1980

This is National Transportation Week and I have come to Pittsburgh first because of this city's long record of leadership in transportation. There are a lot of cities today trying to buy the kind of trolley service you have had for years--and had the good sense to hang onto.

There are a lot more cities that would like to have your busways.

And when it comes to going the distance, there are more than a few cities that would like to have your baseball team and your football team.

Traditionally we celebrate National Transportation Week as a reminder of the importance of transportation to our economy, our society and our personal convenience.

This year there is a bigger reason.

Because the gravest threat we face is not the crisis in Iran, though the safety of our people there continues to command President Carter's highest concern.

Our most serious threat is not even the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or the spectre of terrorism at loose in the world.

The greatest danger is one we have created for ourselves over the past 40 years, and which we are only now coming to terms with: our over-dependence on foreign oil. Today we import nearly 50 percent of the oil we use. And it is costing us dearly: in inflation, in jobs, in our balance of payments. Our economy at home and our ability to act in the world depend on a precarious supply of oil from a politically unstable part of the world.

The threat to our auto industry, and all that the drop in domestic auto sales implies for the steel industry, for the glass industry and for the rubber industry, is part and parcel of our failure to wean ourselves and our economy away from that pipeline to the Middle East.

Yet we got ourselves into this predicament, and surely we have the ability to get ourselves out of it. It will not be a quick or easy thing to do. Like the 40 year process that led to the problem, the solution will take time, steadfast effort, and united support-- not only on the part of the government but from the private sector as well. A united partnership will demonstrate this nation's resolve to do what is necessary to preserve our freedom and act upon our long-standing values of hard work, productivity and efficiency.

The place to focus this effort is transportation, which accounts for more than 50 percent of our total oil consumption. Our private cars and light trucks alone use over one-third of all the oil we consume. And far too much of that oil is simply wasted. For example, 50 million Americans commute to and from work each day alone. That takes an estimated 75 million gallons of gasoline a day while 150 million seats "ride along" unoccupied. If even half of these solo commuters would double up, we could save 14 to 15 million gallons of fuel a day--and cut our imports accordingly.

By itself, it is perhaps not a telling blow for energy independence. But along with our other programs for saving energy and using it more efficiently, ridesharing is a vital component of conservation. And the most direct, least expensive, most sensible way to preserve our nation's security, bolster our economy and maintain our mobility is to conserve energy.

To emphasize that fact, President Carter recently launched a nationwide effort to conserve energy through common sense transportation initiatives. The program depends heavily on the formation and success of a public-private partnership to promote ride-sharing and transit use; to enhance driver efficiency and to encourage all Americans to do their part to conserve energy.

Nationally, the support for conservation has been encouraging. People are driving about 15 fewer miles per week than they did a year ago. Motor fuel consumption is down about 9 percent from the levels of a year ago. The efforts of the President's National Task Force on Ridesharing chaired by Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, are getting good response from state and local governments, private companies and labor unions.

At the Department of Transportation we want to lead where necessary, to help where needed and to work as partners wherever we can to meet our goal of getting 30 million Americans--40 percent of the commuting workforce--into the ridesharing movement by 1985. For example:

* We are setting up a national ridesharing information center and a toll-free telephone hotline for information, technical materials, or consulting assistance. That center, I might add, opens for business today. The number is (800) 424-9184. The line is open to anyone who wants to know how to set up a vanpool or carpool program.

* We are supporting the President's Ridesharing Task Force in establishing a network of public and private sector managers, with direct experience in running employer and public programs, who will be available for telephone or on-site consultation. This executive loan program operating through the information center, will speed the transfer of knowledge so that the program grows at as fast a rate as possible.

* We are conducting a campaign to enlist the chief executive officers of major corporations in establishing ridesharing programs within their companies.

* We are commencing a series of training workshops for managers designated to set up programs in private firms, and in state and local governments. The D.O.T. summer workshops will be held from now through July 22, to provide training and technical assistance to states and local ridesharing agencies.

But beyond all of this, we need your help--to make ridesharing the rule, not the exception, in commuting. We need your help as employers, to expand pool programs if you have them--or start them if you don't. You help your country and your community, but you also help your companies. Ridesharing saves time, reduces fleet operating costs, cuts down on the amount of employee parking space needed, and helps morale.

We also need your help as volunteer participants in the ridesharing executive program, and as spokesmen for its benefits. Most of all, we need your success in your own communities, as testimony and examples for others.

I am confident that we can make a national ridesharing program work. It is succeeding in other cities and, as I shall tell the press in just a few minutes, it is proving to be highly successful here in the Pittsburgh area. I am grateful to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission and to Westinghouse and the many other Pittsburgh Companies that have worked with and are working with the commission to boost ridesharing in this area.

In fact, the success thus far of ridesharing programs here demonstrates that energy conservation in transportation is a proven way to save energy, save money and save our mobility.

Now I am asking you to join with us in a "20/20" program: 20 percent employee participation in ridesharing or transit use, or a 20 percent increase over the current level.

I know we can do it--and I know that the 400,000 barrels of oil we will save each day by 1990 through this effort will help our nation sustain its promise of freedom, economic growth and liveability for future generations of Americans.

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