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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS,
TO THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 10, 1978.

If this winter has taught us anything it is, number one, that our transportation system is still under the control of the Almighty and not the Secretary of Transportation, as we learned when snow storms blocked highways and airports; and -- number two -- that energy is the Achilles heel not only of transportation in this country but of our entire economy.

We were reminded anew these past few months that transportation is our lifestream. When it stops -- for weather or whatever reason -- everything stops.

We are also getting a lesson in the effect an energy shortage can have on our society. The oil embargo of five years ago showed what energy means to our economy and our lifestyle. Today, the coal strike is demonstrating the extent to which we depend on that form of energy.

So when we talk about transportation policies and priorities, we begin with energy. Call it what you will, or dispute it as some do, the energy problem is real. We're not going to solve it entirely by settling the coal strike, or allowing strip mining, or by talking about new sources of nuclear and solar power -- at least before the year 2000.

We're not going to overcome the energy problem in our society until we change our personal travel habits, our preferences for big powerful cars, our tendency to waste fuel and our attitude toward the energy problem itself.

We can, and must, develop new energy sources, as we conserve existing energy supplies. Otherwise, we face a transportation crisis -- because transportation service accounts for 53 percent of our petroleum consumption. Thirty-two percent of the oil we use goes into our automobiles.

We face a money crisis -- because our nearly 27 billion dollar trade deficit last year was due in large part to the 44 billion dollars worth of oil we imported.

We face a foreign policy crisis -- because we're so involved with imported oil and the supplies could be turned off perhaps at a moment's notice, for a week or a month or a year.

So what we're trying to do now is prepare the country for the 1980's and '90's, to see that our economy is not damaged by what is coming. That means we have to make conservation work, and meet President Carter's goal of reducing gasoline consumption by 12 billion gallons by 1985.

To reach that goal we must:

- (1) Give more and more Americans alternatives to the automobile -- whether it's a bus or rail system, a vanpool or jitney service -- at least for part of their daily business and pleasure travel;
- (2) Beef up our ability to move coal and other alternate fuels to factories, utilities and businesses;
- (3) Build smaller and lighter cars that meet tough fuel economy standards; and
- (4) Enforce the 55-mile national speed limit.

A second component of transportation policy is our continuing environmental concern. I'm a great believer in the "environmental highway" and the "socially responsible" automobile; pipelines that do not damage the ecology and planes that do not torture the eardrums. I am committed to increased tanker safety and greater pollution control efforts to prevent oil spills. I do not accept the argument that economic growth and environmental sanity cannot co-exist.

I am still picketed from time to time on I-66 here in Washington, but I-66 here and the Westway project in New York City are directed toward creating highway systems that serve cars and carpools, both private travel and public transit, and do not offend the environment. In other words, when you take parklands you give back parklands. You strive for a system that will move the greatest number of people in the fewest possible vehicles. Then there are areas, such as Overton Park in Memphis or the valleys of Oahu, where we have ruled against highway projects altogether.

A third thrust of national transportation policy is safety. As we build cars that are lighter and smaller, to save fuel, we have to build in better passenger protection. That was the reasoning behind my decision requiring passive restraint systems. I think we can greatly reduce highway fatalities, through slower speeds, safer cars and more attention to such high-risk problems as the drunk or unlicensed driver.

A fourth policy thrust is regulatory reform.

You may be hearing about and writing about the pro's and con's of airline regulatory reform. The government has always regulated the transportation market, beginning with the first rules on imports and the prohibition against interstate tariffs. Our decision in 1977 to support airline regulatory reform and other programs to allow more competition in the marketplace are part of a policy to simplify government regulation and increase competition for the benefit of the consumer.

I think this is the year we're going to pass aviation reform legislation. But it's not going to wreck the system or deprive communities of air transportation. To the contrary, what we're trying to do is take the 40-year-old regulatory statutes, update them so that they reflect the industry as it is today, and arrive at a more logical and simpler system, providing better service for more people.

A couple of interesting things have happened in the past year or so. The air carriers have cut prices, offering greater discount fares to more cities. At the same time, the CAB has taken a more liberal attitude toward such practices. The not so surprising result is that airline earnings set a record in 1977 and the carriers expect a repeat performance this year and the improvements are due largely to the things the airlines have struggled for years to resist.

The other interesting thing is that resistance to regulatory reform, once stubborn and heated, is fading away in the realization that air transportation is a growth market with great potential. Relaxed regulation will help, not hurt, that situation. The latest FAA aviation forecast sees an 80 percent growth in scheduled airline travel over the next 10 years, and an even greater increase in passenger traffic for the commuter-type airlines. So small communities stand to gain, not lose, air service and competitive pricing will put air travel within the reach of more travelers.

The fifth aspect of transportation policy I want to touch on before inviting your questions and comments relates to our outlook on the future and the necessity to make transportation function better as a total system. There are three points I want to make here.

First, I think it's safe to say that the pioneer days of the continental 48 states are over. Except for Alaska, the American frontier is now tamed, settled and well connected by networks of road, rail, water and airways.

So we aren't advocating new major hub airports. Except for completing the essential segments of the Interstate, we aren't involved in a new massive road-building program -- although we are going to put more Federal dollars to work reconstructing and maintaining the roads we have. We have an excellent system of inland waterways, but substantial improvements are needed -- which is why the Administration is hanging tough in support of a bill that would collect fees from the users of the system to help pay development and maintenance costs.

Then there are the railroads. The problems in that industry range from the overbuilt system in the Midwest, where a private restructuring is needed, to the difficulties of making passenger service profitable enough to continue. Another issue caused by years of equipment neglect and deferred maintenance is the 7,000 to 8,000 derailments in the industry each year.

The railroads are vital to our economy. We need their coal-carrying capabilities, and we can benefit from their fuel efficiencies. So the railroads have a key place in our transportation plans and policies.

The second point I want to make is that we have to get it all together and quit treating our different modes of transportation as though they are only in existence to compete with each other. Each mode has a market it serves best -- a job it's best equipped to do. We can't throw one away when a new system comes along, and we can't afford to encourage high-energy systems when low-energy alternatives are available. I want to see competition among systems of transportation between points, not among modes.

That's why, in the new highway/public transportation legislative proposal that went to Congress recently we try to treat highways and transit systems as partners, not rivals. The automobile is not going to go away -- we are too dependent on it and many places are inaccessible without it; but the car is often misused, especially in urban areas. It is expensive to park, to insure and to repair. And the practice of one person driving to work in a 5,000 pound car, bogged down in commuter traffic marked by long lines and short tempers, represents the classic transportation problem today.

So we're trying to provide alternatives to that situation, and at the same time make cars more fuel-efficient so that we can enjoy them longer.

Third and finally, we are committed to faster decision-making and better organization so that policies can be translated into the programs that produce the services people need.

In the last year we have made many hard transportation decisions, including some that had been around the government for 10 or 15 years.

We have looked at the organization and we made some workmanlike changes -- nothing fancy -- so that we had straight lines of authority and everybody involved in an action area knew his or her responsibility. And we got away from management by memo, where everyone comments on an option but nobody decides. I believe in making decisions, not postponing them. Since the perfect decision is rare, and usually recognizable only by hindsight, the prompt decision -- even if imperfect -- is frequently better. And in today's fast-changing world, we cannot often afford the luxury of forever postponing decisions.

We are trying, through our policies and programs to be people-oriented, not hardware-oriented, in our transportation decisions and developments. We began by going out to the people in cities and communities across the country, and by talking with state and local officials, transportation operators and users, and through town meetings and other public forums to find out what the American people need.

We applied what we learned, and we are continuing to work for solutions to today's transportation problems, and for answers to tomorrow's needs, based on the best use of existing systems and the wisest investment of Federal resources. I invite your participation in that process. Tell us through your editorials and columns and letters to the editor -- through all the pages of your journals -- where you think we are wrong or where we could better serve the public interest.

Of course, I hope that occasionally you'll let us know when you think we're right, too.