

# U. S. Department of Transportation news:



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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS,  
AT THE AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION CONVENTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 26, 1977.

I'm delighted that after many years of receding fortunes the transit industry is rebounding and the outlook -- as I see it -- is highly favorable for increased employment and steady growth in public transportation.

Since taking office I have been involved in what I view as a four-phase process in the evolution of a national transportation policy that not only outlines our transportation objectives, but includes the legislative proposals and executive actions necessary to the attainment of those objectives.

Phase One, which took much of the past eight months, involved a review of past policies and recent decisions. I also used the time to revise the Department's FY '78 budget -- requesting, among other items, a \$100 million increase in mass transit grants; to meet with the public, and to consult with state, regional and municipal authorities around the country. In addition to the meetings I have had here in Washington, senior DOT officials have gone out to state capitols and city halls to find out first-hand where the problems are and to seek suggestions on how to deal with them. That effort has produced a 25-page options paper which outlines alternative actions that can be taken to produce better dividends from the transportation dollar.

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Phase Two entails further consultation, based on the options paper. We are in phase two now. I will be meeting with the nation's governors and mayors, and inviting state and city delegations to my office. I will also want labor's thoughts during this period, and I anticipate some very frank and productive discussions.

In Phase Three we will prepare formal proposals to submit to Congress. Phase Four will be the legislative process where we resolve our differences and move to the enactment of new transportation legislation.

The actual process may not work out as neatly as this four-phase approach implies, and I do not mean to imply that we intend to accumulate transportation bills and send them to Congress in bunches. We will move legislative proposals to the Hill as rapidly as possible. But we are seeking a rather substantial change in the way Federal transportation grants are budgeted and awarded, and I consider it advisable to move ahead deliberately and methodically. I hope that the end result of our efforts will be a combined transportation account and a consolidation of highway and transit programs. We want states and cities to have greater freedom of choice in choosing Federal assistance programs and increased flexibility in the use of funds provided under those programs.

It is also important that each mode have an assured source of funding, so that budgets can be planned with certainty. To the extent possible, these funding sources should consist of user fees. Public transit, however, cannot subsist on the farebox alone. If we are to make transit a basic part of urban life, then we must fund it to the levels required. Municipal and transit officials must have the economic stability they need to plan and operate good public transportation systems. This is a joint responsibility, involving a firm Federal commitment and the regional or municipal disciplines necessary to guarantee and deliver the local share.

In the development of our total national transportation policy, there are -- of course -- certain considerations of overriding importance. One is the President's commitment to a balanced budget by 1981. A second is energy and the way we use it. The third is employment, and the opportunities to provide more jobs through transportation systems and services.

Two of these considerations -- energy conservation and increased employment -- have direct transit applications. The third, a balanced budget, can be assisted by alterations in our grant programs -- not reducing the overall amount of transportation assistance available but by using the funds more efficiently and effectively.

For the past 20 years we have concentrated on a major highway construction program that has just about run its course. We are very close to having all the highway system we need. From now on we will be focusing on highway programs of a different sort -- repairing or replacing bridges, rebuilding some of our older roads to make them safer, and putting the finishing touches to the Interstate system.

We now know highways cannot be the sole solution to our urban personal transportation needs. Traffic congestion, air pollution, shortage of land for parking, and rising costs demonstrate we need more than one way to travel. The energy crisis closes the case against the urban highway as the solution to personal transportation.

A few months ago I suggested that a substantial part of any new retail tax on gas should be used for public transportation construction. I believe we must have alternative urban transportation systems available as we move into the 1980's. We can and will continue to depend heavily on our cars for some years to come. They are mobile, personalized and provide flexibility. We can make some gains in efficiency by using carpools and driving fuel efficient vehicles. But local automobile travel -- the commute to and from work, trips to the shopping center, driving the kids to school, etc. -- now takes an estimated 22 percent of the petroleum products used in this country. By comparison, about 10 percent of our petroleum consumption goes for intercity travel, and that includes air as well as highway transportation.

We're now importing half of the oil we use and consuming gasoline at a record rate. Energy Department Secretary Schlesinger said last week that unless we take the energy problem seriously and make genuine efforts to conserve fuel we could experience an energy crisis in the 1980's that will make the social and political pangs of the Great Depression modest by comparison.

We can reduce petroleum-based travel. Or we can increase its efficiency. Our best short-term hopes lie with the latter; our long-range objectives with the former.

We are already taking steps to improve transportation efficiencies. The mileage figures for the 1978 model cars, just released, show better ratings in every price and weight class. The progressively higher new car averages mandated by the standard I announced June 30 will require manufacturers to assure us of greater automotive fuel economies in the future.

At the same time we must do more to divert travel from the less efficient modes to the more efficient ones. This means that in urban areas we must make better use of public transportation.

Overall, transit is two to three times more energy efficient than private automobile use. In peak periods the difference is much greater, perhaps five or six to one. Even a four-passenger carpool compares poorly to the average urban bus in passenger miles per gallon. It is simple mathematics -- one engine with 50 people does better than even a more efficient engine does with 10.

Traditionally we have built new facilities only to accommodate growth or to meet predicted increases in travel demand. While this remains a reasonable approach we must also (1) make better use of existing resources

and facilities, and (2) consider a multi-modal strategy to urban transportation needs. We should take full advantage of the flexibilities of the bus, making it more appealing wherever possible through preferential use of the roadways, and it must be linked efficiently to other public modes -- as we are attempting to do here in Washington with the Metrobus and Metrorail systems. Transit has to become habit-forming, and to do that we must make it easy to use.

Let me say just a word about our policy with respect to rail transit.

What we normally think of as rail transit is best suited to the high-volume corridors of our densely populated cities. The number of such corridors is limited, and we must continue to carefully analyze trends of urban density to determine where heavy rail systems are practical.

In the nation's newer cities, which were shaped largely by the automobile, the dispersal of population and businesses makes heavy rail transit very difficult to justify -- especially with construction costs now running above 50 million dollars a mile. Even in San Francisco, which we think of as one of the more compact of our Western cities, the BART system has not attracted the ridership we all believed would occur. Ridership on the 17-mile Metrorail system now in operation here is doing better. It averages 130,000 passengers a day -- about the same number that ride the entire 71-mile BART system. The reason for the comparatively high utilization of Metrorail is easy to perceive. The lines are tied to the bus system, serve the busy city center with its high concentration of offices, stores and services and connect with National Airport.

I do not rule out the prospect of further rail transit systems -- especially systems using light rail technologies. I do suggest that in light of the immense capital investments required, cities considering costly rail systems may be well-advised to pursue them on an incremental basis. We forget that the familiar systems -- those in London, Paris, New York and Boston -- were all built in stages, a piece at a time. The London Underground, for example, is more than a hundred years old and is still being expanded. The New York system began with 23 miles, grew to some 200 miles over a 40-year period and is still adding extensions.

In any case, rail transit programs depend ultimately on the willingness of the local community to support them. It does not make sense for the Federal government to commit hundreds of millions of public dollars for new rail facilities unless there is a local vote of confidence for such a system. And because rail transit systems are long-term propositions, I believe cities must view their investment as part of a broader community development strategy. I consider it reasonable that we require compatibility and coordination between rail transit plans and land-use objectives -- and that we accord preference in our major capital grant decisions to those communities which, on their own volition, take steps in that direction.

Our transportation grant program for FY '78 includes \$3 billion for the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. I think we can take pride in the fact that, through UMTA programs, we are supporting essential transit services throughout the United States, beginning new services through our demonstration grants, and -- in the process -- creating jobs in the public transit and related industries.

While some unions are losing members, yours is gaining. After long years as a depressed industry, transit employment has shown an 18 percent increase since 1970. Wages in the transit industry have gone up by 67 percent during that same period, while the consumer price index rose 47 percent, resulting in a significant net gain in real income for the transit worker.

We estimate that the current UMTA program is generating some 79,000 direct jobs in the transit industry (including construction, operation and planning), and creating an additional 108,000 jobs in related sectors of the economy. I look for increased employment as more public transportation services come on line, and more riders turn to transit.

We cannot expect to move all the people to the center city, or all the jobs to the suburbs. But we cannot escape the need for urban transportation that is energy-efficient. We must accept the fact that we will have to give up some of the almost limitless travel freedom we have grown accustomed to because of the automobile. Transit must be prepared to take up the slack.

It seems to me that one of my principal tasks as Secretary of Transportation is to help guide this country in a transition from the free wheeling days of gasoline abundance to a new era of energy scarcity. The centerpiece of an energy efficient transportation system for people must be good mass transportation -- that is convenient, inexpensive, and takes people where they want to go. It must be good enough to entice people away from their cars, it must offer easy access for the elderly and the handicapped. It must help to bind our cities together to make them the liveable and exciting places they can be. This is a big task, but I look to the ATU, which has so much stake in the steady growth of mass transit, to help bring this new era of energy efficient transportation into being.