

# U. S. Department of Transportation

# news:

Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590



REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS,  
TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON, D.C., FEBRUARY 8, 1978.

I want to say something today about our national policy on transportation. As the snowstorms crippled most of the East this week, we were reminded again that transportation is our lifestream. When it stops, we stop.

That's why the decisions we make at the Department of Transportation and elsewhere in the Carter Administration are so important. These decisions will be felt through the 1980's. They will affect our lifestyles and our mobility -- whether it's getting to work or being able to afford a vacation flight to Europe.

There is another reason to talk today about policy. In the next decade, my Department alone will spend 150 billion dollars or so of the taxpayers' money. The people have a right to know what motivates us when we spend that kind of money. They have a right to know what our priorities are.

Well, when you talk about priorities in 1978, you start with energy. A nation with a 26 billion dollar deficit in its balance of payments doesn't have to look very far to find its problem. And that problem is the 44 billion dollars worth of foreign oil we imported last year.

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## I. OIL

I think the American people know where that oil is going. It's going into the gasoline tank of their cars and through the pipe and out the rear end. Still, UPI reported that Congressmen returning to Washington from Christmas recess said their constituents didn't believe there is an energy crisis.

Now I'm going to repeat what you've heard many times before. The crisis is real. We are at the mercy of imported fuel. And it could become believable some day in the 1980's when someone in the Mideast decides -- for one reason or another -- to turn off the pump for a week or a month or a year.

In our Democratic society, logic precedes necessity, which is followed in turn by action. We're at the logic stage now. And we can do one of two things.

We can start right now to conserve fuel and create some alternatives to the automobile. Or we can wait for the tidal wave of necessity to hit us -- and swim like hell.

I believe we can meet President Carter's goal of reducing gasoline consumption by 12 billion gallons a year by 1985. We can reach it by:

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

President Carter described our dilemma very well at his news conference last month. "As those dollars go overseas" to buy foreign oil, he said, "we are in effect exporting American jobs." I think we can reverse that flow and restore a healthy balance of payments.

## II. "PEOPLE" DECISIONS

When we talk about the policy of this Administration, the obvious question is, "Has anything changed?" The answer is yes.

It has changed because we are making "people decisions." We are not dominated by existing corporations that want to maintain the status quo.

Our policy translates into a series of program decisions -- those made in 1977 and the ones to follow.

### The Environmental Highway

The decision on I-66, the Westway in New York, the refusal to build through Overton Park in Memphis, or the Valleys of Oahu, all represent a conscious policy to require new highways to fit into the environment of the area both esthetically and economically. This will continue.

### The Public Transportation Alternative

Metro in D. C., MARTA in Atlanta, the new plans in Baltimore-Buffalo-Miami and other rail-oriented cities represent an attempt to build alternatives to the automobile. There is no argument about these projects. The new systems need to be de-bugged and the costs and construction times brought under control. I want to ride on Metro from the station near my house to the building where I work, but it is two years late and double the cost of the original plan. I want that to change so in the next city it's one-half the cost and one year early.

### The Socially Responsible Motor Vehicle

The fuel economy standards of last July, the additional economy standards for light trucks, the emission controls, and the airbag decision are all part of a policy to make the mobility of the motor vehicle available for everyone -- as long as possible, with as little harm as possible.

### Modernizing and Maintaining the System

The rebuilding of Union Station as a multi-modal transportation and visitor center, the decision to modernize Lambert Field in St. Louis and not build a big new airport at Columbia/Waterloo, Illinois, the insistence that the replacement of Lock and Dam 26 at Alton, Illinois be environmentally sound and that users understand that new facilities must be paid for -- are all parts of a policy that says we must use our present system better.

### Simplifying the Regulation of the Marketplace

The government of the United States 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.

### Completing the Organization of the Department

The reorganization of the superstructure of the Department of Transportation, which had the 10th floor of the building full of people checking up on what the people on the other nine floors were doing, is the first step in simplifying the whole structure and moving toward direct line authority to the managers of programs.

The second step is the bill before Congress now to make highway and transit programs compatible so they can be administered together in the future. The third step will be to present to Congress in 1979 a proposal for the whole Department. It is a step-by-step policy of completing the original plan for the Department.

### III. THE FUTURE

Obviously, there are many programs and decisions that I did not mention. But the list I just gave you has set the thrust of this Department. It will continue in the next three years.

Having polished off the nagging decisions-- some of which had been kicking around this Department or this government for 10 or 15 years -- we are moving on to our vision of the future.

The trail-blazing days in this country are over. The great Interstate highway system is 90 percent completed. We have to concentrate now on finishing the essential gaps, especially in the urban areas, and finding a way to help the states maintain what we've built.

With perhaps one exception, there won't be any major hub airports built in this country in the next decade. Our policy has to shift to making sure that the system is competitive, that people in small towns can get some service and that the growing number of passengers get where they're going in safety.

For America's decaying inner cities, transportation is the key to pumping in new business and commerce. We can help in several ways:

- (1) Public transit can be the cornerstone of the new downtown when it is planned in concert with office buildings and shopping malls, as cities such as Minneapolis have done and cities such as Baltimore have on the drawing board.

- (2) We all know that the automobile is choking our cities. When New York City sends up a cloud of exhaust fumes, people cough in Connecticut. This is a national problem, and we have to turn to experiments such as the driverless Downtown People Mover. These systems may be the answer in crowded streets where the automobile can no longer be tolerated.
- (3) In each major city Uncle Sam is the biggest customer for rental space. Federal employees are often housed haphazardly around the city. DOT and GSA should be talking about using the crumbling or outmoded railroad stations found in most cities as Federal office centers and as magnets for the banks, shops and restaurants that can serve those employees.
- (4) A free ride. I would like to see one of our major cities experiment with a fare-free system of public transit as a means of luring people away from their cars -- at least for part of their trip.

That's where we're headed. We have a good transportation network in this country. DOT is shifting from an agency that builds those systems into one that is concerned about how the systems serve people.

That means fighting downtown congestion, noisy airplanes or unsafe cars. It means making things work for people -- and not propping up outmoded systems with endless government subsidy.

And it means making decisions. Finally settling a problem, as Judge Brandeis once remarked, is much more important than worrying for years that it be settled perfectly.

As one who grew up as a Liberal Democrat through the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier and the Great Society, I don't know yet what label I want to put on this Administration.

I will just say that I have served in elected office, and I believe that policies change as elections take place. As a new Administration we are making decisions promptly, honestly and openly. I am willing to be held accountable for those decisions -- and to live with the results.

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