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U. S. Department of Transportation

news:

Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590



FOR RELEASE 12 NOON
Wednesday, February 8, 1978

DOT 18-78
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ADAMS SAYS POLICY WILL CUT OIL IMPORTS AND OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO THE AUTOMOBILE

A sensible national transportation policy can sharply cut oil imports, help restore the balance of payments and offer alternatives to the automobile for most Americans, Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams said today.

Speaking at a National Press Club luncheon, Adams also noted that a major change is taking place in the Department of Transportation that will affect the decisions of the next decade.

"We are shifting from an agency that builds systems to one that is concerned about how those systems serve people," the Secretary said.

He listed a series of decision in his first year -- airbags or other automatic restraints, fuel economy standards, placing a lid on hub airport construction, airline regulatory reform and environmental rulings in several highway cases -- as examples of that trend.

Adams said his policy will:

- (1) Meet President Carter's goal of reducing gasoline consumption by 12 billion gallons a year by 1985.
- (2) Help restore the U.S. balance of payments and create new jobs.

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- (3) Have the goal of providing alternate transportation -- whether bus, light rail system, vanpool, jitney or taxi service -- to many Americans who now must either depend on private automobiles or who have no cars.
- (4) "Sell" public transit to commuters by demonstrating that it can get them to their jobs quickly and cheaply.
- (5) Push for the "socially responsible car" -- one that is safe, economical and non-polluting.

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

Transportation can be a key factor in reviving downtown business and commerce in America's major cities, the Secretary added. He pointed to efforts in several cities, funded by the Department of Transportation, that plan new office buildings and shopping malls in concert with subways, light rail systems or busways.

"We all know that the automobile is choking our cities," Adams said. "When New York City sends up a cloud of exhaust fumes, people cough in Connecticut." He urged the wider use of energy-saving and non-polluting vehicles such as Downtown People Movers, sometimes called "horizontal elevators."

The Secretary also made the following points:

- He will encourage a demonstration of free public transit in a major city as a means of luring drivers from their cars -- at least for part of their daily driving.
- Air travel policy will concentrate on building a safe, competitive system that serves more towns since, "with perhaps one exception, there won't be any major hub airports built in the next decade."
- Highway policy will be directed toward finishing the essential gaps in the Interstate Highway System and finding a way to help the states maintain that system.

The thrust of DOT in the next few years will be aimed at fighting downtown congestion, noisy airplanes and unsafe cars, Adams said, and "making things work for people."

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