



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

# News:

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Washington, D.C. 20590

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
MINORITY SYMPOSIUM  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
FEBRUARY 12, 1985

As I listened to Mayor Barry just now, I thought how fortunate we are to have such a concentration of highly sophisticated minority business enterprises in the Washington metropolitan area. We need your skills and motivation. We need you to help solve the transportation problems facing us in the rest of this century. We've let contracts to minority business enterprises at record-breaking pace the past two years. And I couldn't be more pleased with the performance -- and especially with the outstanding results. I'm here to tell you today: the opportunities will increase again as we move forward in 1985 -- fueled by commitment, by a sense of the past and by hope for the future. During the last 200 years America has undergone major economic, social and political changes which profoundly affect the way we live and think. The questions may change -- the strategy may change but the goal remains the same -- equal access to America's promise of economic independence.

Fifteen years ago, few opportunities existed for minority contractors. Today minorities are delivering the goods and providing services to a wide range of federal-aid projects. Minority contracts at DOT run the gamut from providing computer services to constructing interstate highways and building a Coast Guard ice-breaker.

And that's not all. Federally-assisted contracts awarded by state and local governments to disadvantaged business enterprises in 1984 set an all-time high. The 1984 total of \$1.7 billion in contracts with minority and disadvantaged businesses far exceeds the 1983 record of \$1.2 billion. That total for '84 includes \$236 million in direct contracts and subcontracts, for goods and services for DOT. It also takes into account \$1.2 billion in contract awards and subcontract commitments for highways and



\$273 million for transit. Our contracting with women-owned businesses is also on the rise.

The numbers are impressive. As I indicated earlier their significance lies in the performance behind them. They tell a dramatic story of your strength, your determination, and your ability. They assure equal opportunity in America -- as both a moral imperative and an economic reality. Let them also reaffirm my determination to see the progress continue.

For my own commitment to minority business enterprise speaks for itself. I too know something about your struggle. For I know your road to economic opportunity has not been smooth. I know you've had to break many barriers.

Though your burden clearly has been heavier, I know what it was like to be a member of a generation of women who broke through economic and political barriers at the same time that millions of black Americans were sitting down for the first time at lunch counters and in the front seats of a bus in Birmingham. In many ways our causes spring from the same roots -- discrimination and prejudice.

I recall the day in September 1962, when I entered Harvard Law School. I was one of 25 women in a class of 550. And I'll never forget one of my classmates coming up to me that first day of school, one of the men, who demanded in tones of moral outrage to know what I was doing there. I can remember every word. In fact, that man is in Washington right now. And someday I'm going to remind him of this. He said to me: "What are you doing here, Elizabeth? What are you doing here, when there are men who would give their right arm to be in this school, men who would use their legal education?" The implication was, of course, that I was taking the place of a man. Come to think of it some might have thought the same thing when I was appointed Secretary of Transportation.

I don't pretend my experiences as a woman struggling to achieve equal opportunity in America are as significant as the struggle of minorities seeking a chance in business. But my struggle has helped me understand. It's helped me to be sensitized -- and it has increased my determination to fight to remove any remaining barriers to equal opportunity in our land wherever they exist, and to assure that all segments of our society have every chance to benefit from renewed economic prosperity.

One of my first acts as Secretary of Transportation was to direct my Administrators to make sure that Minority Business Enterprise efforts are rated as critical job elements in those merit pay positions which include contracting responsibilities. In other words, the promotion prospects and merit pay increases for those executives will depend in part on how faithfully they support minority business contracting opportunities.

But our effort goes beyond simply making contracting opportunities available. Minority contractors may need special assistance in developing business strengths which are taken for granted by traditional firms. We are sensitive to those needs. We know, for example, a big federal contract means little to a minority firm unable to secure adequate bonding and financing. DOT has established two programs to deal with these problems.



The first of these is a short-term lending program enabling minorities, and women-owned businesses to obtain working capital. This program is operated by the Atlantic National Bank of Norfolk, Virginia -- a minority-owned bank.

The second is a DOT Bonding Assistance Program, underwritten by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company. It provides an opportunity for minority and women business owners to obtain bid, performance, payment and other surety bonds for transportation-related contracts. This program is operated through the insurance company's network of independent agents.

Let me say further that we recognize the contracting complexities at any level of government. A newcomer to the government procurement arena must be as mystified as Alice in Wonderland. To help contractors like yourselves, we have 14 regional program management centers to alleviate some of the problems. Many of you may be familiar with the Omega Group, the program management center serving the District, Maryland and Virginia. The Omega Group did an outstanding job in helping with this symposium today. And they are out there to help you every day of the week. Omega is just one of the outstanding outreach centers. They seek out new minority firms and help get them into the system. They give technical assistance and information. Quite simply, these centers ensure minority, women and disadvantaged businesses participation in contracting activities of our grantees -- the state and local government.

We also know you share our concern for another problem and our determination to deal with it. I refer to "front organizations," which are an insult and affront to the integrity and sincerity of the minority contracting program. We intend to deal firmly and swiftly with "fronts." We cannot allow them to destroy our progress.

All of this progress would not have been possible without an Administration committed to a healthy and growing economy and a President with faith in creative, free enterprise and private initiative. President Reagan's minority contracting initiative of December 17, 1982, directed federal agencies to increase minority procurement. You have made that presidential directive a reality.

When I think of your progress and of the dynamism of your future, I recall the words of the founder of Livingstone College in my home town, Salisbury, North Carolina. Joseph Charles Price was a black leader of great intellectual stature who always looked beyond the trials of the present to the triumphs of the future.

"I don't care how dark the night," Price once wrote, "I believe in the coming of the morning."

Surely we stand today in the sunlight of a morning bright with promise for all Americans. Our nation's economy is healthy. Transportation is indeed "on the move in 1985," propelled, in part, by the energy of our minority businessmen and women.

Yet there is still another campaign which remains unfinished -- one that requires your commitment, talent and dedication. I refer to highway safety.

Just as we set our goals high in minority contracting, we do not view any goal that saves American lives, as beyond our reach. Together with concerned segments of the private sector we are pledging \$40 million a year to inform the public on occupant protection and assist in promoting state safety belt laws.



These resources will go to work where it counts -- in hometown America and in State houses throughout the nation. Auto accidents cost American taxpayers almost \$2 billion a year in federal public assistance programs alone; \$5 billion annually in lost wages, not to mention the immeasurable human suffering involved. Surely we can invest \$40 million to stem the tide -- to make safety belts a way of life for all Americans.

I'm happy to announce that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has awarded a contract to a minority-owned business right here in the metropolitan area to perform an important safety task. Maxima, located in Maryland, will assist in developing the National Occupant Restraint Information System. Employees of Maxima are moving into NHTSA to begin work on the first phase of the contract. They will develop the system to provide immediate access to belt use rates, attitudinal trends and subsequently, crash data. This information will enable us to track trends and determine the effectiveness of safety efforts.

The gains we are experiencing today, in our transportation industries, our economy and even in our quest for greater safety, are in large part the result of a new spirit of confidence and competence at large in our land. We are enjoying the benefits of private enterprise renewed, competition rekindled and marketplace challenges rediscovered. We have displayed a willingness to take daring economic risks for great economic gains. We have placed our faith in a free market disciplined by competition.

I think of a woman who knew great adversity, one whose spirit and example inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller -- and she summed up her philosophy in a single sentence. "One can never consent to creep," she wrote, "when one feels an impulse to soar."

We have an impulse in America to soar -- to achieve new heights of safety, to loosen the shackles of economic regulation, to provide at last economic and social justice to all our citizens. Indeed, to go as far and rise as high as our national will and competitive skills will take us. Make no mistake about it; that summit still beckons. The frontier is still open. We are in the morning of our destiny -- and transportation will contribute much to a long and glorious day.

Thank you very much and God bless you all.

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