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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHWAY-RAIL SAFETY
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
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It's really you who deserve all the applause today. Your commitment to grade crossing safety has not diminished since this national conference first convened in 1967. In fact -- if it's possible -- your commitment has increased because you know the benefits of perseverance.

This is a determined group -- you know what you want and what the country needs in terms of increased grade-crossing safety. I am delighted to be here with Bill Druhan, representing state railroad officials; Tom Bates, from labor; Jim Martin, from the railroad industry; and Jim Burnett, the very hard-working Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board. The Board plays a vital role -- we welcome their counsel and the opportunity to work together on issues where we can make such a positive difference. John Riley and Dick Morgan join me in bringing you this Administration's firm commitment to improved highway-rail safety. We pledge to do everything in our power to reduce the loss of life and the incidence of injury on railroad grade crossings in this country.

As Secretary of Transportation, I have no higher priority than safety -- across all modes of transportation. Most recently, I have been involved in matters concerning aviation safety and security, following the incidents of international terrorism over the past month: the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in Athens and the murder of a young Navy diver; the lives lost and those wounded in the bombings at Frankfurt, Germany, and Narita, Japan. And even more horrible to contemplate is the likelihood that the 329 passengers of Air India who died over the Atlantic Ocean were, in fact, murdered.

I think all of us had a lump in our throat when we saw the joy of the American hostages upon returning safely home -- finally touching American soil again at Andrews Air Force Base two weeks ago. President Reagan expressed it well: "There's only one

thing to say, and I say it from the bottom of my heart in the name of all the people of our country: Welcome home. We're so happy you're back safe and sound... It is truly a national joy that greets your return."

The responsible governments of the world have ample resources to win the struggle against terrorism, provided all of us exercise the necessary political will. In this country, we have taken immediate steps to enhance our force of federal air marshals. We will also require enhanced security training for flight and cabin crews on U.S. carriers and an airline employee will be designated as a security coordinator for each flight. Surveillance of aircraft while they are being serviced on the ground will be increased and a number of new baggage security rules have already been implemented at airports across the country. On flights carrying passengers, the airlines will be required to hold cargo for a period of time or perform X-ray or physical inspection of freight, cargo and mail. The only exceptions are perishable items from known shippers. We are prohibiting all sales in this country of tickets involving air service to Lebanon. I have also revoked the authority of Middle East Airlines, a Lebanese flag carrier, to serve the United States.

These actions -- taken out of concern for and a deep commitment to the safety of all traveling Americans -- are a logical extension of the Department's emphasis on transportation safety. The "white glove" inspections last year by the Federal Aviation Administration involved 350 of the nation's air carriers and looked into every aspect of airline operations. And our inspections found -- overall -- very safe operations throughout the industry. We have also begun an intensive inspection of general aviation and have increased the safety inspector work force by 25 percent. In an era of deregulation, we want to ensure that safety is in no way being diminished.

But perhaps our biggest safety challenge is on our nation's highways, where 92 percent of transportation fatalities occur. Due to the 1982 nickel-a-gallon increase in gasoline taxes, we've been able to double the amount of money going to the states for repair of roads and bridges. Last year, Federal, state and local governments collected more than \$53 billion in highway funds, the largest sum ever spent to construct, repair and rehabilitate highways and bridges across the United States.

And last July, I announced my decision calling for automatic crash protection for automobiles -- such as automatic belts, air bags or other technologies -- to be phased-in beginning with 10 percent of the 1987 model year cars. The decision also encouraged states to pass mandatory safety belt use laws. If enough states enact effective belt use laws, the automatic restraint provision will be rescinded.

Prior to my announcement, no state had enacted a belt use law. Today, I am proud to say, four states -- New York, New Jersey, Illinois and Michigan -- have belt use laws in effect. An additional ten states have enacted laws which will be implemented in the coming months. And that's the quickest way to save the most lives.

For the first time in the 15-year history of rulemaking on automatic occupant protection, we now have in place a rule that is actually saving lives. In the first three months the New York law was in effect, 65 lives were saved. We can expect hundreds of lives to be saved by these new laws this year, alone, and that number will increase dramatically as millions of additional motorists begin buckling up.

Our campaign for increased safety extends to the drunk driver, public enemy number one, as far as I am concerned. Thanks to grass roots efforts, there has been a real consciousness-raising in this country -- a growing awareness that alcohol is involved in half of our fatal highway accidents, over 20,000 a year. And we are going to keep working until every last drunk driver is off the roads and highways of this country.

John Riley tells everyone that safety is his most important objective as Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) -- and I know that to be a fact. And I know he has a tremendous amount of help from a lot of people in this audience. Last year was the safest year ever for American railroads. The fact that this was achieved when train-miles increased more than seven percent and ton-miles increased more than 10 percent, makes it even more remarkable. Railroad management and labor can take real pride in this accomplishment.

One of the most dramatic improvements in railroad safety has been in the area of hazardous materials transportation: between 1978 and 1984, train accidents in which there was a release of hazardous materials declined by more than 60 percent. Even more remarkable, since 1980 not a single death has occurred as a result of the release of hazardous materials from a rail car.

Much of the industry's improvement in safety can be attributed to the benefits of deregulation which, since the Staggers Act, has enabled the railroads to earn the revenues to maintain their track and equipment. The railroads have used their positive cash flow to reshape their infrastructure into a safer system; from 1979 to 1983, railroads invested over \$6 billion in track and structures. These investments have definitely paid off.

The revitalization of the rail industry has certainly affected Conrail. Conrail, as you know, came into being as a property of the U.S. Government in 1976, after Congress had come to the rescue of seven bankrupt or failing rail companies in the northeast and midwest. The taxpayers have spent several billion dollars keeping it in operation, and over the past four years, it has turned a profit.

In 1981, Congress directed us to take the government out of the freight railroad business. The plan I have submitted to Congress for transferring Conrail to the private sector after almost a decade of federal stewardship was reached after many months of careful deliberation. Norfolk Southern will pay us a minimum of \$1.2 billion in cash at closing. The actual dollar amount will probably be higher, since the final purchase price is keyed to the amount of cash Conrail has on the day of closing. Norfolk Southern will also surrender Conrail's accumulated tax benefits. This surrender of tax benefits --\$1.8 billion in net operating losses and \$306 million in investment tax credits --represents true value to the U.S. Treasury and is an important element of the total compensation. Norfolk Southern has also agreed to be bound by a strong set of protective covenants that will safeguard the public interest for five years during the transition to private ownership. And I feel strongly the covenants are the heart of this proposal. The financial strength of this railroad is crucial, and these covenants are designed, as I've said, to go right to the heart of it. I have recommended to Congress a sale plan that assures long-term rail service to the region, true employment stability for Conrail's work force, and a very high level of confidence that Conrail will never again become a

ward of the federal government. We can now give Conrail the opportunity to prosper as a truly private-sector business and as a key part of a stronger company.

While we're trying to get the federal government out of the business of running railroads, rail safety will continue to be an area of federal involvement. We are committed to using our full capability and available resources to be the standard bearer for the world's rail safety laws. Today, much of our efforts are focused on such difficult rail safety issues as grade crossing safety and abuse of drugs and alcohol. In 1984, FRA also completed systemwide safety assessments of four railroads -- Amtrak, the Chicago and Northwestern, the Delaware and Hudson, and the Alaska Railroad as well as the New York City subway -- and our findings were encouraging in nearly every respect. This year, we plan to conduct three systemwide assessments. In fact, we have already completed the assessment of the Burlington Northern and have begun the assessment of SEPTA in Pennsylvania, to ensure that its operational practices and equipment are safe for the transportation of the thousands of commuters who ride its trains daily.

The Department's support of Operation Lifesaver, this outstanding public education program, continues at a higher level than ever before. FRA inspectors will participate in over 1,200 Operation Lifesaver presentations this year. At these presentations, FRA personnel will inform school and civic group audiences about the dangers inherent in rail-highway grade crossings and the risks associated with trespassing on railroads.

Rail-highway grade-crossing accidents continue to be a major safety concern because of their severity and potentially catastrophic consequences. For example, in 1983, one out of every 15 grade crossing accidents resulted in death.

For this reason, we are greatly encouraged by the fact that in the last 10 years, the total number of accidents at grade crossings has been reduced significantly.

Many of the nation's most dangerous crossings, where high traffic volumes intersect heavily-traveled rail lines, have been improved by installing train-activated flashing light signals, automatic gates, and other major physical improvements. Fatalities have been reduced by 90 percent and injuries by 68 percent, at locations where grade-crossing improvements have been made. To date, improvements implemented under the Rail-Highway Crossing Program indicate a savings of 3,400 lives and 18,500 injuries prevented. As a result, the number of motorists killed at grade crossings each year has been virtually cut in half to an all-time low in 1983 of about 575.

But even one death is too many and thus I am announcing today a major new program to help states improve motorists' safety at thousands of low-volume, railroad-highway grade-crossings throughout the United States. I am hopeful that this program can do more to save lives at grade-crossings.

Equipping a grade-crossing with flashing lights can cost as much as \$40,000 per crossing and gates can cost almost \$100,000. The new program will emphasize the use of relatively simple, inexpensive -- but potentially effective -- safety improvements at low-volume crossing sites where the installation of active warning devices and other

high-cost safety devices is not practicable. These low-cost improvements include putting up adequate signs and markings along the highway, clearing obstructions to make warning devices and approaching trains more visible to motorists, and upgrading the track crossing surface to prevent cars from stalling on the tracks. The improvements will be paid for with existing rail-highway safety funds.

The program will be launched in September under a demonstration project called "Railroad Crossing Corridor Improvements." There are currently 150,000 grade-crossings not equipped with automated warning devices. About half the grade-crossing fatalities each year occur at these crossings. The program is aimed at improving safety at these locations.

The magnitude of the safety problem itself is a compelling enough reason for our safety initiatives. But in any campaign, even one person can make a difference. The other day I heard our First Lady, Nancy Reagan, tell a story that makes this point very effectively.

Before sunrise one morning, a young person sat watching an old man walking along the beach. As the old man walked, he would stoop down and pick up starfish after starfish stranded on the sand by the tide and throw them back into the sea.

Finally, the youth became impatient. He went up to the old man and asked what he was doing. The old man explained that if the starfish were left on the beach in the sun they would die. The youth replied, "There are miles of beach and hundreds of starfish. You cannot possibly rescue them all -- what could it possibly matter?" The old man stooped down, picked up another starfish and before returning it to the sea quietly said, "To this one, it matters very much."

Our commitment to grade-crossing safety extends to every man, woman and child in this country. Each precious life that's spared speaks of the success of our safety program. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your hard work and your commitment. I rely on your support.

I frequently think of a woman who knew great adversity, yet her spirit and her 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.

God bless you all in your important endeavors.

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