

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ANDREW H. CARD, JR.
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to make my first appearance before this Committee. I thank you for the invitation to be here today--outside of the normal cycle.

I am also grateful to have the opportunity to pay tribute to Chairman Lehman and the Ranking Minority member, Mr. Coughlin. Mr. Chairman, I admire the leadership you have given this Subcommittee for ten years, the longest tenure of any chairman of this Subcommittee. Both you and Mr. Coughlin have championed the importance to this country of transportation programs and investments. In the face of tight budget constraints, necessary to control and reduce the Federal deficit, you have succeeded in providing balanced, growth budgets for DOT. The Department applauds you both. I also want to recognize the fine professional staff of the Subcommittee and pledge my support to continue the tradition of a good working relationship between this Subcommittee and the Department.

Deputy Secretary Jim Busey will present our Office of the Secretary budget request. As introduction to his testimony, I would like to highlight my top priorities for the Department and say a few words about the role of the Office of the Secretary.

My efforts at the Department will focus on promoting safety, accessibility and efficiency in our transportation system. I know that I have the firm commitment of the dedicated men and women of DOT in support of this mission.

One of my key priorities is the implementation of the landmark surface transportation act, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act--ISTEA. Swift and efficient action on our part to implement ISTEA will help rebuild our transportation infrastructure, which is so key to our Nation's economy and competitiveness. We are working with State and local governments to ensure the smooth flow of Federal dollars into transportation projects--which support so many jobs--and to encourage intermodal planning to produce the most appropriate solutions to transportation needs.

Allow me to highlight the results of our efforts so far. States have obligated 40.1 percent of Federal-aid highway funds available for obligation this year. Dollars obligated exceed last year's experience--\$6.86 billion versus \$6.64 billion a year ago. In the transit area, \$1.43 billion in formula grants has been obligated to date, compared to \$1.03 billion a year ago. We are tracking these grant programs on a weekly basis. I have used this information to write and call Governors and local officials to offer our help to move projects along.

Multimodal and intermodal transportation planning is critical to meeting the challenges of the new law. We've provided guidance to the field offices to ensure smooth implementation of the flexibility provisions in ISTEA that allow certain funds to be used for either highway or transit projects. Within DOT, we are placing greater emphasis on intermodal planning and consultation. The Office of the Secretary has a particular role here, as you know, and the Office of Intermodalism, called for in ISTEA, will help enhance this role. We must continually identify intermodal opportunities and assess and learn from our intermodal experiences. In addition, the new Bureau of Transportation Statistics will be important in this effort.

A central mission of DOT is to uphold and ensure the safety of our transportation system, and I intend to build and improve on our safety records. For example, the gains made in highway safety--the all-time low rate in 1991 of 1.9 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles travelled--must be continued. One of my priorities is to advance the rules implementing the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991, to help improve the safety of our transportation system.

Reauthorization of our aviation programs is another key priority of mine this year. The Administration's proposal, which was recently introduced, advances many important principles of the National Transportation Policy. It calls for investment in infrastructure, improved intermodal connections and greater reliance on user fees. It also proposes stronger partnerships with state and local governments, improved technology and sensitivity to the environment. In keeping with the intermodal emphasis I mentioned earlier, we have recommended that Airport Improvement grant funds be available for intermodal projects that directly improve access to airports. I am pleased that the reauthorization bill, just reported out by the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Public Works Committee, includes many of our provisions.

I also want to ensure a balanced implementation of our regulatory responsibilities. DOT has taken very seriously the 90-day moratorium and regulatory review called for by President Bush. We published a notice in the Federal Register seeking public comment and, in addition to reviewing the comments we have received, we are conducting a thorough review of DOT regulations. I have met with the senior officials in charge of this effort to review our progress and personally conveyed the importance of this project.

I want to spend a few moments on the Office of the Secretary. My view of the role of the Office of the Secretary is to set and lead the basic agenda for the Department with the longer term view in mind. The OST role is also to provide support for the operating administrations as they advance their individual missions, and to foster intermodalism throughout the Department. From a budget perspective, we are proposing to invest in training and automation to enhance the capability and productivity of DOT employees as well as improvements to ensure the management integrity of our programs. Our FY 1993 budget request for OST reflects this emphasis.

Mr. Chairman, as you and I have discussed, there are a few organizational changes I have in mind. One of the first changes I plan is to create an office of industry affairs under the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, which will build on the activities previously located in Governmental Affairs. In my view, this change is important because it will allow the Office of Governmental Affairs to target its efforts on serving governmental groups--both Congress and representatives of State and local governments. Furthermore, our relations with industry groups can be integrated into a larger, strategic communications effort when situated in the Office of Public Affairs. As noted before, I am moving forward with the Office of Intermodalism and establishing a separate unit, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics as provided in ISTEA. We will report back to you shortly as we finalize plans for these new offices.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I will do my best to ensure that the Department and the Subcommittee continue in the spirit of communication and cooperation. I hope we can count on the Subcommittee's support as we go forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today.