

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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CONFIRMATION HEARING

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

FEBRUARY 7, 1992

MR. CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

It is a true honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the 11th Secretary of Transportation. I appreciate your speedy response to my nomination in scheduling this hearing so early in this legislative session. For me the last two weeks have been filled with excitement, and I have especially appreciated the opportunity to meet with so many of you individually to discuss your concerns and to get your counsel.

I am also honored to have been introduced this morning by Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry, Senator Warner and Senator Robb.

Obviously the opportunity to be here would not have been possible had it not been for a great number of people, including many who couldn't be here today. My family -- strong, guiding and very much the biggest part of my life (introduce family members) -----.

I also owe much to the many fellow White House staffers, especially Sam Skinner whose counsel has been invaluable, and the dedicated people at the Department of Transportation led by Admiral Busey.

The day-to-day operations of DOT and the contributions by the more than 109,000 dedicated public servants are nothing short of miraculous. They keep America on the move. -- Just think -- the FAA's traffic control work force safely guides more than 174,000 operations every day. The men and women of our Coast Guard on average save a life every 90 minutes and seize 600

pounds of illegal drugs every day, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) programs save an estimated 19,000 lives each year.

When the President called me into his office less than two weeks ago and told me he wanted me to accept this challenge, I felt like I was coming home ... to my early interests and training, to issues I worked on for so many years at the local and state level, to see again the problems I know all too well and the whole range of opportunities to address them.

I am a proud native of Holbrook, Massachusetts. In the Northeast I grew up confronted by aging infrastructure, congestion and pollution. Anyone from New England is acutely aware of the critical role our roads, airports, rail system and seaports have played in the region's development. Efficient transportation is essential to America's economic growth and to our international competitiveness.

I have always been fascinated by how things work -- taking apart many of my father's watches -- and then occasionally putting them back together -- for I was also fascinated by making things work. Studying engineering for me was, therefore, a natural choice. Early on, as a structural engineer, I helped design buildings and a few bridges. I even inspected subway tunnels and mapped structural problems and leaks, and I did some classic R and D. That practical experience will stand me well if you confirm me to be the Secretary of Transportation. My technical background will benefit the generation of

research, development and technological innovation that must form the cornerstone for our transportation system of the 21st Century.

Part of my training -- a real experience -- was at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point. There I gained a tremendous respect for the role of our U.S. flag carriers and for the challenges facing American mariners. A firm commitment on my part to promote safety stems from this period, too, for I lost classmates to mishaps on ships in the Mississippi and the North Pacific, and as a cadet engineer on an old C-2 cargo ship out of New Orleans, I saw a fellow crew member -- an oiler -- burn in a fire. For all forms of transportation, **SAFETY WILL BE MY NUMBER ONE PRIORITY.** If you let me become the Secretary of Transportation, I will devote as much time as it takes to ensure that our workers, commuters and families are safe as they travel.

There probably haven't been too many people who hitchhiked the skies. I have, or at least did during my student days at the University of South Carolina. The Columbia International Airport found me on occasion looking for private pilots "flying North." The rides always materialized and left me with a special appreciation of some of air travel's challenges. Since those days, the good news in aviation has come from the deregulation which opened the skies to more Americans, at better prices than ever before, without sacrificing safety. The bad news, of course, is that a variety of economic forces have hurt the airline industry financially. One important way that I will

strive to help the industry is by doing everything possible to assure that foreign markets are open to U.S. carriers. Our airlines quite simply, are the best in the business, and I want to make sure they continue to be the best.

I know the FAA reauthorization will be considered this session. I look forward to working closely with you, especially Senators Ford and McCain, to make sure the resulting legislation is the best it can be for air travelers, commerce, and the industry. Working together, we can build on a record of profound accomplishment in aviation with the recent passage of the Aviation Safety and Capacity Act; Aircraft Noise and Capacity Act; and Aviation Security Improvement Act.

Engineers are problems solvers by nature. That is one reason I got into politics -- first at the local level where the rubber meets the road, especially in transportation. That is where decisions are made on how things such as bridges get built or fixed, how problems of congestion and air quality get solved, how a town's development gets a badly needed boost. I know that local and state governments make things happen in transportation. The federal government facilitates.

When I was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives I took special interest in transportation. A South Shore legislator "lived" the challenges and frustration of commuters on the Southeast Expressway and the Central Artery. I know of needed commuter rail service and the value of mass transit. My goal is to have DOT foster an intermodal

transportation system today that will help build a seamless system for tomorrow. The President's National Transportation Policy and the landmark surface transportation act which the President signed six weeks ago are the blueprints for success. Implementing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act will be a priority of mine -- it means rebuilding our infrastructure and creating jobs.

Traffic congestion seems to be the bane of a commuter's life. Because of gridlock, an unacceptable 8 billion hours of potential productivity were lost in 1990. Less congestion means lower prices for consumer goods, a better ability to compete overseas, and cleaner air in our communities. DOT plays a big role in the environment. I will see to it that the Department is a full partner with our states and cities in efforts to attain the goals set down by Congress in the Clean Air Act.

Transportation goals must be met in ways that are consistent with environmental goals.

A key to making transportation work better for all is something that I advocated during my 1982 run for Governor of Massachusetts -- a multi-modal strategy. Today the term is intermodalism. Whatever it is called, it is the key -- making more efficient the movement of goods and people across all modes of transportation on the ground, at sea, and in the air.

As I mentioned, SAFETY will always be number one. I commend this committee, particularly Chairman Hollings and Senator Danforth, for their leadership in instituting drug and

alcohol testing for transportation workers. Keeping drunk and drugged drivers off our roads will continue to be critical for this Administration, and I will make sure it stays that way. I want to achieve the same kind of success nationally that the District of Columbia did this past Holiday Season -- sobriety check points and tough enforcement resulted in zero alcohol-related deaths on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

There is much work to be done. I hope you will give me the chance to be Secretary of Transportation so that together we can make a difference.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman. I look forward to answering the Committee's questions and to working with you and your colleagues as partners to provide safe, efficient, environmentally sound and affordable transportation and ensure economic opportunity for both today and tomorrow. We all know that mobility leads to economic vitality, independence for all whether they be poor, elderly, young, or disabled. Thank you.