

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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COURTESY HEARING

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

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MR. CHAIRMAN and DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the next Secretary of the Department of Transportation. I am grateful to the President for the confidence he has shown me by offering this nomination. I also thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling this hearing to discuss transportation programs within the committee's jurisdiction.

I also express my thanks to Sam Skinner, whom this committee well knows, and whose counsel has been invaluable to me.

Finally, allow me to express a word of thanks and admiration to the dedicated people at the Department of Transportation, led by Admiral Busey. Their work is nothing short of miraculous. They keep America safely on the move. The FAA's traffic control work force safely guides more than 174,000 operations every day, the Coast Guard, on average, saves a life every 90 minutes, and the programs of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration save an estimated 19,000 lives each year.

If I am confirmed as the Transportation Secretary, my first priority will be to continue and, where possible, strengthen the Department's commitment to safety. My commitment to safety stems from personal experience. We have all witnessed the tragedy that always accompanies serious accidents. I will devote as much time as it takes to ensure that our workers, commuters and families are safe as they travel.



Just as personal experience has taught me the importance of safety, other experiences have prepared me for the challenges that lie ahead. In fact, when the President 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 and 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.

Engineers are problem 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, and 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.

As an engineer, I know a well thought out blueprint is vital to complete any project successfully. And as a former state legislator, I know the benefits that accrue from writing good laws. So it is from these perspectives I commend this committee for helping craft the landmark surface transportation legislation that the President signed into law two months ago. I firmly believe this new law and the President's National Transportation Policy are the blueprints for success in meeting America's transportation needs. Implementing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act will be a priority of mine -- it means rebuilding our infrastructure and creating jobs.

Creating jobs, as soon as possible, will be one of my first objectives. The President has directed the Department to accelerate the release of dollars from the Highway Trust Fund. And that is happening: twice as much Federal aid highway money was obligated last month as was obligated in January 1991. I will see to it that Highway Trust Fund dollars are not only



released quickly from Washington, but that we work closely with the states to put that money to work right away, creating jobs and maintaining our infrastructure.

This new law is landmark legislation. As the President has said, it will carry the Nation into a new transportation era.

This bill provides:

- focused federal investment in a National Highway System that carries 75% of goods transported in the United States.

- unprecedented flexibility for state and local governments to spend federal funds as they see fit for local transportation.

- new opportunities for private sector involvement in meeting surface transportation needs.

- increased funding and new incentives to promote congestion relief, highway safety, and environmental quality.

- a new emphasis on technology to prepare our transportation network to meet tomorrow's challenges.

As you well know, the new law emphasizes intermodalism in its title and in its substance. This is a concept I advocated ten years ago as a state legislator and as a candidate for Governor. Back then I called it "multi-modal strategy". Today it is called intermodalism. Whatever it is called, it is the key to making more efficient the movement of goods and people across all modes of transportation on the ground, at sea and in the air. My goal is to have DOT foster an intermodal transportation system that will help build a seamless system for tomorrow.

Any seamless system of transportation must address traffic congestion, the bane of a commuter's existence. 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.

One of the other critical environmental challenges facing the Department is the implementation of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. That, too, is landmark legislation and DOT, principally through the U.S. Coast Guard, has made significant progress in establishing the National Pollution Funds Center and initiating the many rulemakings and studies required by the Act. I can assure you that the complete and successful implementation of the Oil Pollution Act will be a high priority of mine.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I look forward to working with you and answering the Committee's questions.