

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY  
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Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind remarks. My respect and admiration for you are unbounded. America and the world are fortunate to have your leadership. I am grateful for the confidence you have placed in me to guide the best agency in Government. And I am truly honored.

From Holbrook, Massachusetts to the White House, I have had the benefit of working with talented, dedicated people. Each one contributed to this moment. I thank, too, the United States Senate, which confirmed me both unanimously and expeditiously.

Many thanks to Sam Skinner, whose leadership at D.O.T. was historic. So I have some large shoes to fill.

Let me also thank our Deputy Secretary, Admiral James Busey, for his outstanding leadership during this time of transition. He ably guided the Department as Acting Secretary. Thank you, Jim. I'm honored to have you on my team.

You who know me know this: There are none from whom I derive more support and happiness than my family. You have already met my daughter, Tabetha. I'd like to introduce other members of my family who are here today.

Mr. President, I promise not to tell my grandmother story. But, in addition to those I just introduced, I must add my thanks to her, because she instilled in me early a desire to be an activist in politics -- to serve, to contribute, to make a difference.

As Secretary of Transportation I can assure you that I will base my decisions each and every day on whether what we are doing will promote safety, accessibility and efficiency in our transportation system. I know that I have the firm commitment of this Department behind me.

I'm deeply impressed with the dedicated men and women who work here, Mr. President. The Coast Guard saves a life every 90 minutes, our FAA air traffic control work force guides more than 170,000 operations a day, and our highway safety programs save nearly 20,000 lives a year. That's 52 lives every day -- talk about responsibility and making a difference on the job!

We have here with us today, Mr. President, many of these employees whose work affects the lives of all Americans. With willing hands and open minds, they make things happen -- whether behind a desk, out at sea, or on the road -- throughout our nation's transportation system.

All of you accomplish so very much -- each day, year in and year out. I'm proud to be joining your team.

In closing, we know that things do not happen -- things are made to happen. This museum is proof that vision requires hard work and total commitment. From the Wright Brothers, to Chuck



Yeager, to the crew of the aircraft **Voyager** -- which accomplished the amazing feat of flying nonstop around the globe without refueling -- Americans have been at the forefront of making the dream become a reality.

This same spirit of innovation is evident across the range of transportation in this country. Whether by land, sea or air, we are a people who refuse to take "no" for an answer when meeting a tough challenge.

On April 1st, the Department of Transportation becomes 25 years old. The theme for our 25th year is "The Future Starts Here." How true that is! How we will travel to jobs, to market and to our homes tomorrow depends on how we do our job at D.O.T. today.

So today, let me say that all of us at the Department will face head-on the demanding challenges to ensure safety, accessibility and efficiency in our transportation system in the coming years.

Thank you.

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