



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

17-S-75

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY WILLIAM T. COLEMAN, JR.,  
TO THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION, PHILADELPHIA, PA.,  
SEPTEMBER 23, 1975.

I'm greatly pleased to be here today, on "home ground," to meet  
with the delegates to this convention.

We have much in common. The "Triple-A" goes back to the earliest  
days of the automobile, and your service to the nation has been no less  
than your service to the motoring public. Your DWI Counterattack and  
Gas Watchers programs have been highly effective counterparts of our own  
efforts to rehabilitate drunk drivers and conserve fuel. Then, too --  
and this is the issue that brings us together today -- we share a  
mutual concern for the future of the automobile in our society.

I like to share some of my thinking since, after discussion, I  
hope to get your support for some of our new policies. But I realize  
that the support will not be forthcoming unless you are brought in on  
the formation of such policies. As the late Senator Vandenberg said  
in the context of bi-partisan foreign affairs in the late 1940's and  
early 1950's, he had to be consulted before policies were finalized.  
The true sailor, it is said, likes to be present for the laying of the  
keel, if he expects to sail on that ship for a large part of his life.

For some reason, secretaries of transportation get accused of being  
"anti-auto" or "anti-highway." I have not escaped such criticism.

In ruling recently on the proposed construction of I-66, a much  
disputed section of urban Interstate in the Northern Virginia suburbs  
of Washington, I became the target for a great many letters. One writer  
sent me a cover from TIME magazine - a December 1973 edition, I believe,  
with a cartoon picture of an automobile and the caption "The End of the  
Affair." He seemed to interpret my decision against the highway as a  
vote of no confidence in the automobile.

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Such, of course, was not and is not the case. But one of the recurring problems I encounter is the presumption that in attempting to broaden the transportation base in this country, to balance the modes and change methodologies, and to make better use of latent or mis-used capacities, that it is somehow necessary to oppose one mode in order to favor another.

That, certainly, is not true, and to set the record straight let me quote from my statement on National Transportation Policy, which I sent to Congress last Wednesday.

My position, is this: "the automobile is and will continue to be the most universally accepted form of transportation in America. It is the most flexible and responsive mode and provides the greatest freedom of mobility. It accounts for significant employment opportunity. Moreover, highway transportation is essential to the preservation of American mobility and to our economic well-being, and I intend to maintain and improve its utility."

But the motor vehicle and our highway system cannot properly or effectively be defended -- nor can they, in fact, be preserved -- unless we acknowledge their faults and take action to correct those faults.

For that reason, I go on in my policy statement to note that the automobile "is also a major contributor to fatalities, injuries, air pollution, high energy consumption, and congestion. Therefore, both its technical performance and its intelligent and socially responsible utilization are matters of urgent and continuing concern.

In keynoting this convention, I want to talk for a few minutes about what we can, and must do, to retain and maximize the automobile's unique qualities while, at the same time, improving its energy efficiency, economic and socially responsible use, and safety. In any ordering of priorities, increases in fuel efficiency must occupy a high place, so let's consider first what can be done - and is being done - to reduce motor fuel consumption.

Despite higher gasoline prices (the average price nationally is now just over 59 cents a gallon), people continue to depend on their cars as much as ever. Last year Americans clocked an almost unbelievable one trillion automobile miles of travel - and used 2½ billion barrels of motor fuel.

Demand currently is running at a rate of about seven million barrels a day. That's 2.4 percent under the comparable 1973 pre-embargo figure, due to slower speeds and a larger percentage of more fuel-efficient cars on the highway.



To be successful this mini-trend must become the norm; the "gas watcher" ethic, the motorist's creed. More of the 40 million Americans who drive alone to work every day must switch to carpools. By "doubling up," the subcompact driver can save \$200 to \$500 a year - by joining a five-person carpool using a standard-size car, an individual can save \$650 to \$1,400 a year.

And more Americans, like it or not, must abide by the national 55 mile-per-hour speed limit. While the welcome drop in highway deaths (down 17 percent last year) has virtually over shadowed the energy conservation benefits, the fact remains that we could save 200,000 barrels of motor fuel a day by strictly observing the posted speed limit. As one bumper sticker I saw recently says: "all in favor of conserving gas, raise your right foot."

Conservation efforts are essential but, by themselves will not suffice. We must arrive at a firm and effective national energy policy. And we must bring about a significant increase in automotive fuel efficiencies - on the order of 100 percent - in the relatively near-term future.

Let me say at this point that, in my judgment, the failure of Congress thus far to act on President Ford's energy program, or to propose an alternative plan, is both disappointing and distressing. We have, I fear, lost much valuable time in facing up to the inevitable. In 1973, just prior to the embargo, 35 percent of our oil supply came from what Federal Energy Administrator Frank Zarb refers to as "insecure sources." Today, two years later, we are dependent on foreign sources for 38 percent of our supply. In other words, we have lost ground as well as time, in efforts to reduce our vulnerability to the energy-rich nations.

Even more important, in 1971 we spent four billion dollars for foreign oil. In 1975 we are spending 40 billion. Thus the question is not whether Americans will have to pay more for gasoline, but will that additional money go to foreign coffers or to U.S. citizens? If it goes to U.S. citizens, the money will provide capital to create jobs and other investments. To the extent that U.S. oil companies might make "windfall" profits, those profits can be recaptured through a special income tax. But if our additional expenditures for oil products go to foreign sources, all of these advantages are lost.

I won't belabor the energy issue any further - I'm sure Mr. Zarb will paint an explicit picture in his address to this convention tomorrow. The fact remains that the automobile must be made more fuel-efficient if its future vitality is to be assured.

Fuel-efficiency, in my judgment, is not something that can be mandated by legislation, any more than it can be attained through wishful thinking. Again, in my opinion, the auto industry has the incentive and the means to produce the good mileage cars the public clearly wants.

The figures released by EPA yesterday clearly vindicate President Ford's judgment in leaving to the private sector those things it does best. For the first time in many years, American manufactured automobiles ranked at the top in fuel efficiency.

The Administration does not presently favor the use of any artificial means - such as the setting of some arbitrary mileage requirement or the imposition of a tax on heavy cars - to inspire the development of fuel-efficient cars. In a very real sense, the automotive industry is the key-stone of our economy, and any sudden or harsh government demands for "instant" fuel economy could cause economic turmoil. It is largely for that reason that President Ford also favors the continuation of Federal emission standards through the 1981 model year - to avoid unnecessary increases in automobile prices and decreases in gasoline mileage.

But while any technically premature demands on the auto industry for more fuel-efficient vehicles could hurt the manufacturers' ability to produce cars, a failure to respond to market demand will just as surely cripple the industry's ability to sell cars. I think the profit incentive is sufficiently strong to attract the private capital needed for the development of better and more energy-efficient automobiles.

This is not to say Federal guidelines are not in order. As you know, we agreed with the industry last year on a 40 percent improvement in fuel economy by 1980. As a matter of fact, as figures show we are already half-way home. Further, I am currently leading a task force consisting of representatives from the Energy Research and Development Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Energy Administration, and the National Science Foundation - as well as my own Department - in an effort to set motor vehicle fuel economy goals beyond 1980. Such goals, we feel, must be fully responsive to our transportation needs, and compatible with environmental, safety and economic objectives.

Actually, we began moving in that direction some time ago when we expanded our Research Safety Vehicle (RSV) program into what we call our "S-3-E" concept - standing for safety and the three E's of energy, environment and economy.

This is, in short, a program for judging how the personal automobile can best be designed to provide the safety and mobility that society demands from it, and yet satisfy the growing energy, environmental and economic parameters of that same society. That, to understate the situation, is a difficult task and our best hope is for a well-balanced combination of performance specifications in an acceptable design. Hopefully, we will arrive at a concept not only of what society can expect in its automobile of the future, but of what it can afford as well.

Let me turn from the impact of the energy situation on the automobile, to some basic considerations of the place of the car in today's society. Given the problems of traffic congestion, air pollution and limited land resources, can the car and an increasingly urban culture co-exist?



Once again, the problem lies not with the automobile, but with our use of it. It has to be much more socially responsible. We desperately need what was described at the Congress on Automotive Safety, held in San Francisco last July, as the "ethical car" - one that doesn't "kill, waste, pollute or congest."

Since we can't shut our eyes to the harmful aspects of the automobile, and since we can't - and don't want - to banish the private motor vehicle from our lives, logically we must take the only rational course open to us and that is to evolve ways to use it more sensibly. We must, to paraphrase Wilfred Owen, find ways to be motorized and still remain urbanized and civilized.

How, then, do we do that?

First; by upgrading public transportation, to afford commuters and shoppers a more equitable choice of travel from suburb to city, or within the city.

Second; by enabling cities to develop public transportation, at least on a par with highway projects. The transfer provisions of the 1973 Federal-Aid Highway Act allowed cities, for the first time, to substitute transit projects for unneeded highway construction. The 1974 National Mass Transportation Assistance Act authorized nearly \$12 billion for public transportation (over a six-year period), and - for the first time - stipulated that Federal funds could be used for transit operations. Our 1975 Federal Highway Act, now before Congress, would further expand the states' and communities' freedom of choice in solving their transportation needs.

Let me comment on that bill for just a moment. It reflects our conviction that funding authorizations for highway transportation programs should be adequate, but consistent with other priorities. In other words, they should not be affected either way by the current revenue yields of gasoline and other automotive taxes.

We know, for example, that there are several billion dollars worth of urban Interstate segments "on the books" that probably never will be built. At the same time, there are rural sections that should be built to complete the intercity Interstate network.

Let me make it clear that the Administration's bill does not decrease by even one penny the amount of money authorized for highways, if that is what the states and local communities want.

Look at the figures:

For the Interstate system - \$3.25 billion/year.

For rural highways - \$1.05 billion/year.

For urban highways - \$800 million/year.

For safety - \$400 million/year.

Turned back to the states - \$1 billion plus/year.

The Administration's bill would give priority to the construction of these "nationally significant" components of the Interstate system. It also recommends that Federal funds be used for repair and major maintenance and rehabilitation, to save our Interstate highways from the kind of "creeping deterioration" that has eroded the nation's rail assets.

But while the bill spurs the construction of highways where they are most needed - where alternatives to the car may be few and far-between - it affords greater transportation flexibilities in urban areas, where alternatives to widespread use of the private automobile are appropriate and needed.

Provisions of the bill would: (1) give the states a billion dollars more each year in new revenues; and (2) allow states to transfer up to 40 percent of urban or rural funds from one program to the other. We believe this flexibility is badly needed, if cities are to be enabled to make transportation choices based on their particular and peculiar needs. Ultimately, we anticipate a complete merger of highway and mass transit funding for metropolitan areas.

Then, third; in addition to improvements in public transit and in the methods of transportation funding, the utility of the car can be improved through better traffic management.

Admittedly, several of the propositions implicit in our concept of effective traffic management may take some getting used to. Planners and engineers, for example, will have to become more concerned with moving people than moving vehicles. We may even have to acknowledge that the individual's right to use his private vehicle is no longer absolute.

We will require urbanized areas, under the terms of the 1974 Transportation Act and as a condition of Federal assistance, to submit a traffic management plan, indicating by stages how that plan will be implemented. Depending on the community, the plan may contain a variety of actions: the use of reserved transit lanes, improved transit scheduling and dispatching, traffic signal pre-emption to speed transit vehicles, and other bus preference techniques. It may also include some constraints on automobile traffic, such as: parking restriction, differential highway tolls to promote off-peak travel, staggered work hours, and incentives to shift people from private cars to carpools and transit.

Two Administrations in DOT - the FHWA and UMTA - jointly announced just yesterday the commencement of a study to determine the feasibility of "auto-free" zones in downtown areas. If feasible, those cities willing to participate will be selected for Federally-funded demonstration projects.

That transition must be achieved. Commuting by car in the average American city today is no joy ride. We can cut our losses in wasted fuel, wasted time and polluted air by pursuing, on the one hand, those high capital investments that will bring relief in the long run: and on the other, those incremental, low cost actions that produce tangible benefits in the short run. I assure you, however, that I do not favor the imposition of motor car disincentives prior to or in the absence of efforts to provide acceptable alternatives. For that reason, we shall continue to emphasize to urban communities the need to improve the quantity, quality and efficiency of public transit service as a condition of continued Federal assistance.

In conclusion, I think it is clear that the transportation policies that took shape when we had endless reaches of land to build on, and unlimited energy to burn, are no longer acceptable.

We have invested heavily and, for the most part, wisely in our highways and in motor vehicle transportation. We must act now to protect and enhance that investment, by bringing our automobiles and our highways into closer conformity with other national goals and values. We look to you in the "Triple-A" - for 73 years the friend of the motorist - to help us achieve that objective.

I am sure that without diluting your efforts in behalf of the motorist, you can help us make the automobile more socially responsible; and assist in our mission which is to move people economically, efficiently, and expeditiously.

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