



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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**NEWS**

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WILLIAM T. COLEMAN JR., TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION,  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, SEPTEMBER 29, 1975.

I have been looking forward to being here today. I am among friends and former colleagues. In addition, New Orleans is a great place to hold a convention. A large number of great national and international issues have been resolved here -- most of them in Pat O'Brian's!

I think this first APTA convention is a significant occasion. We in the Ford Administration have been stressing for some time now the need for a more unified, comprehensive approach to transportation in this country. Looking at APTA and the alliance of transit interests represented here, I can assure you that it is even nicer to see someone else practicing what one has been preaching!

Indeed, we have been doing more than just preaching. Within the past five months, the Rail Revitalization Act of 1975, the U.S. Railway Association's Final System plan, the bill to permit its financing, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1975, and the Airport Development and Assistance program have all been sent to the Congress. Several other major industry reform bills are in the final stages of preparation. And the first statement of national transportation policy, outlining broad directions for future policies and programs, was released just 10 days ago.

I will talk more about the public transportation aspects of that policy in a few moments. But first, let me say that President Ford has asked me to bring you his personal best wishes for the future of this association and the success of this convention, as well as his regrets that he could not be with you today.

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I share those regrets, because I think there is perhaps no better place than this convention to see evidence of the dramatic changes which have taken place in the transit industry within the past five to ten years.

Some of these changes have come by choice. Others have come about because there was no other choice. But in all cases, it has become increasingly clear that transportation in this nation is undergoing a major transformation -- from what it was yesterday to what it should be today and must be tomorrow. Public transit certainly has a leading role to play in this drama.

Right now, we stand in cross-currents of concern over the energy shortages we face, the air we breathe, the cities in which we live. In this turbulent climate, the barometer fixed on the success of past policies is too frequently falling sharply.

The energy crisis, perhaps more than any other single factor, has demonstrated this critical need to re-evaluate many of our past practices and attitudes. In transportation, I believe it has clearly pointed out the dangers inherent in too great a reliance being placed for too long on one principal mode of travel; and has strengthened the belief that no community can afford any longer to sacrifice its public transit interests on the altar of the private automobile.

Our strength and vitality as a nation are rooted in the diversity of our make-up. This axiom is no less true in transportation, where it is essential that we strengthen and make the best possible use of each mode if we are to have a total transportation system that serves the needs of this nation.

That is why I think the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974, which President Ford signed into law last November, is one of the most important and socially responsive pieces of transportation legislation ever produced. This act enables cities to develop public transit at least on a par with highways by providing nearly \$12 billion for public transportation over a six-year period. More importantly, this act for the first time, permits the use of Federal funds to cover transit operating subsidies.

In addition, our Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1975, now before Congress, would further expand the freedom of choice offered states and local communities in solving their own transportation needs. Thus, it would increase the potential of the public transit option.

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 at the same time they must be consistent with our priorities.

The Administration's bill would give priority to the construction of "nationally significant" components on the Interstate system. 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 both 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.

I would not have taken the job of Secretary of Transportation had I not been convinced of President Ford's honest commitment to developing new and better responses to the transportation needs of today and tomorrow. I think both the '74 Transit Act and the '75 Highway Bill reflect this commitment, as well as our resolve to turn years of rhetoric into positive action.

To that end, we in the Department of Transportation have drafted and sent to Congress a Statement of National Transportation Policy, which I mentioned a few moments ago. This, if I may say so, is a "first" - and I would hope that each of you will get a copy of this statement, if you do not already have one; study it and then join in the debate over the broad policy directions outlined therein.

By no means is this a document meant to be cast in concrete. Any national transportation policy must be a living, evolving process. It must be responsive to changing social conditions, and to the perceptions of this nation's transportation needs. In a word, it must be flexible.

Nor do I expect everyone to agree with everything contained in the policy statement. But at the same time, I would hope that there is not anyone who cannot agree with something in it! What we are hoping is that somewhere between those two extremes, we can -- by working together -- obtain consensus on the broad policy considerations which should underlie our response to the nation's transportation needs.

At the very least, the statement sets forth policy guidelines which will-- during my tenure as Secretary of Transportation -- shape departmental decisions pertaining to the execution of ongoing programs, and to the development of new proposals.

Transportation is not a joy ride. We can no longer afford to treat it as such -- haphazardly speeding toward the future without really knowing where we are going until we get there. Indeed, far too much of the joy has gone out of transportation today because we have not, in the past, dealt realistically and responsibly with its social side effects.

That is why it is of the utmost importance now that people in the transportation industry become aware of what is in this policy, and contribute fully to its evolution into a policy map that can guide us accurately in the years ahead.

Public transit is given serious and extensive consideration in this policy statement, as an integral element in the framework of urban and suburban needs. The specifics of responding to these needs are to be left up to the local and state governments involved: because, as you know, each urban area is unique in its own needs and development objectives. Thus, this policy statement does not attempt to define the optimal urban transportation system, nor identify cities in which we will build rapid transit systems, nor designate where the next highway will go. Our purpose was not meant to be an exercise in specific transportation tactics.

Instead, we have outlined policy objectives by which we will attempt to ensure that each community is helped in responding to the fullest extent possible to its individual public transit needs.

First, we are going to require analysis of the cost-effectiveness of transportation alternatives as a condition of eligibility for Federal assistance in any major transportation investment.

The impact of this policy on public transit could be significant. It would encourage the improvement or expansion of public transit where such action could, more cost-effectively, replace plans for a new and costly highway in that corridor. Clearly, this is the type of rational, responsible evaluation of transportation alternatives which must be fostered if we are ever to attain the proper balance in our transportation system - and if our cities are to remain liveable.

Toward that end, our second policy objective is to make Federal funding conditional upon the development and implementation of transportation system management plans.

Specifically, each urbanized area will be asked to develop a program of traffic management measures designed to improve the efficiency of existing transit services. Examples include the designation of a coordinated network of reserved transit lanes wherever such lanes can contribute to more efficient and reliable bus operation; procedures to enforce exclusive lanes; improved scheduling and dispatching techniques; traffic signal pre-emption and other preferential measures taken to assure better transit service with existing resources.

Those of you acquainted with our current programs and policies recognize that this emphasis on traffic management techniques has never been exactly foreign to our thinking. The Shirley and El Monte busways are primary examples of previous efforts along these lines, supported by Federal assistance, as are the transit malls under construction in Portland and Philadelphia.

Likewise, we in Washington are well aware of the efforts APTA has made toward securing exclusive rights-of-way for transit vehicles in various metropolitan areas. It should become increasingly apparent that -- like APTA -- we encourage and support such alternatives where applicable.



If public transit is to better serve the needs of our cities, then our cities must act to better serve the needs of public transit.

Third in our overall policy outline for public transportation is an increased emphasis on the principle of incremental planning and staged implementations.

Rapid transit development should be viewed as a continuous, open-ended and evolutionary process. This requires harnessing some of our national impatience, which dictates that if we want a 100-mile system, we must build it all right now.

Let me stress that we are not discounting the need for thorough and coordinated long-range metropolitan planning. That is, of course, essential. Neither are we seeking to dampen a growing enthusiasm for investigating rapid transit alternatives. Rather, we are encouraging cities seeking to build rapid transit systems to begin with a system that serves the present and can be expanded in the future.

This approach to building and funding elaborate transit projects will, I think, bring the rapid transit alternative closer to the feasible than the fanciful in many areas where that is not now the case.

Fourth, we state in our policy that the present types of fixed-rail systems can be regarded as appropriate on a cost-effective basis only in high-density areas.

I have said that a metropolitan area of less than two million in population cannot adequately support a fixed-rail rapid transit system at today's costs. I think this is an accurate measurement, in general terms, and one which should be used as a rule of thumb.

But like all rules of thumb, there are striking exceptions, and the initial discussions and decisions must evolve from the local community. Thus, whatever the size of the community, I would hope any determination to build rapid transit is based on realistic appraisals of its service versus its cost to the community. Failure to take this realistic approach in the beginning could only lead to a greater failure in the long run.

Fifth, we intend to give strong support to efforts for developing a type of rail system which is less costly to build, operate and maintain. Our research and development efforts in this area, which received so much attention several years ago, are continuing. And I can assure you our commitment is still firm. Through cooperation with the private sector, I am confident that we will accomplish our goals in this direction before the end of this decade.

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Sixth, we want to give preference in Federal transportation funding to those localities that demonstrate transit planning consistent with broader community goals. For too long, transportation has been regarded simply as a means to an end -- a way of getting from point A to point B. Public transit's effectiveness as a tool to design the future development of a community has been too often ignored in that process -- and it is this situation we intend to correct in the future.

Finally, we will continue to encourage the planning and operation of public transit on a coordinated, metropolitan-wide basis. Transportation decisions such as those which must be made in the years just ahead cannot be made in the shadows of jurisdictional jealousies. Nor can they be treated as skirmishes in on-going battles between transportation modes or vested interest groups.

At the same time I am convinced, in that regard, that over-and-above the recent rebirth of public transportation in many of our nation's cities, with its nearly universal upswing in ridership, the automobile is going to remain our preferred form of transportation. I think we must face facts, and -- like it or not -- that is a fact. The great American love affair with the automobile is not over.

But it is also a fact that the time has come for us to end the illicit aspects of this affair, and eliminate its illegitimate offspring -- urban congestion, air pollution, excessive fuel consumption, and mounting highway death tolls.

Cities and citizens alike must recognize that the time isn't far off when we will have no choice but to ban private automobiles from the central business districts, at least during certain hours of the day. The private automobile must be used in a more socially responsible way, and we must encourage all efforts to minimize its negative impact upon our cities.

It is significant, I think, that only last week the Department's Federal Highway and Urban Mass Transportation Administrations announced a joint study of "auto-free" zones in cities, including the funding of several urban demonstration projects to test the workability of this concept within the year.

While I know this comes as welcome news to APTA, which has long been supporting such action, the increased responsibility this places on public transit also must be recognized and accepted within this industry.

Your responsibility in this process -- indeed, your role in the total, long-range development of an integrated national transportation system -- is to provide the kind of public transportation systems that will both inspire and enable people to leave their cars at home. Our role on the Federal level is to help you to do this, in coordination with states and local planning units of government.

I can pledge to you our cooperation and dedication to the success of this effort, and I ask for the continuation of yours. I mean it most sincerely when I ask for your review and comments on the transportation policy statement, because I think your comments are important. More than that, I think they are essential if we are ever to achieve the broad-based consensus on the direction we should and must move in transportation in the years ahead.

Only by working together, by setting aside past differences and finding new common ground, can we assure that our future transportation systems will not only work, but work for us.

I thank you for inviting me here today; I applaud your efforts within APTA; and I wish you continued success.