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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

**URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION
ADMINISTRATION**
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REMARKS BY C. CARROLL CARTER, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION, AT THE 12TH ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS, APRIL 9TH, 1970.

It may be necessary for me to assure you at the outset that I have long since taken to heart the wisdom and counsel of Oscar Wilde when he said, "It is always a silly thing to give advice, but to give good advice is absolutely fatal."

Should there be any advice in these remarks -- and I don't intend for there to be any -- I have taken Horace's advice when he said, "Whatever advice you give, be short."

I will refrain from offering advice but I have some thoughts and observations on the national public transportation program which hopefully will be of interest and help to you in bringing our Administration into focus.

National public transportation is not a short subject. Far from it. But I think the case can be put simply. The case is this: in addition

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to highways and cars, it is now crystal clear that our cities need good, modern, well-designed, attractive, highly reliable, convenient public transportation systems. We need it as an alternative choice for the motorist and we need it as essential transportation for the non-driver -- be he rich, poor, old, young, handicapped, or just plain sick -- sick of being stuck in traffic.

No two ways about it, there are no two ways to get around in our cities. Indeed, often times, like in the morning and the evening, there isn't even one way.

President Nixon's national public transportation program will give a good beginning toward building the bus, rapid transit, subway, commuter railroad, and inter-connecting systems our cities need. The emphasis and direction that Secretary Volpe and Carlos Villarreal have given to this "mobility mandate" is intended to make on-street, people-carrying, fare-collecting systems a reality in the shortest possible time. A tall order -- a big order -- but the order of the day.

There are some particular and special opportunities in public transportation, especially at this particular time.

First of all, the motoring public has already come to understand that cities need something more than highways and freeways -- even if those improvements are buses and rapid transit systems that they might not use. The motoring public is accepting the rather equitable

notion that public transportation is the responsibility of those who benefit from it, irrespective of whether they use it or not.

Secondly, the cities themselves see mass transit as an economic tool with which to broaden their tax base, revitalize downtown, stabilize residential neighborhoods, and improve their municipal income capabilities. Cities with good transit do better than cities with poor transit. Transit and city growth are directly related. Toronto will tell you they make money on their subway extensions. Increases in Toronto property assessments are greater than the investment debt service required by new transit improvements.

Thirdly, significant progress can be made in transit without re-inventing the wheel or persuading Americans the fastest way home from work is to be shot from guns. We don't need to invent, so much as we need to implement, apply and use the many bits and pieces of design and technology we now have available. Already available technology needs only to be designed into new or proposed city transportation vertibrae so as to make it possible for that city, its people and all that moves about and in it, to better live, function and thrive, one with respect to the other, all because all parts of the city are more accessible to all other parts.

Even though there are no two ways about it now -- shortly we hope there will be two ways about it: good highways and equally good public transportation.

A few observations may help to bring our national program into focus:

- Public transportation has a new national priority.
- Public transportation now has a major administration in a cabinet-level department to formulate and carry out a national public transportation policy.
- Whereas income and jobs are the strategy of our overall national policy -- with housing, health, and education close behind -- clearly, transportation has a new first importance.
- President Nixon's commitment to a \$10 billion, 12-year program to build new transit systems, with \$3.1 billion available for commitment almost immediately, presages a new day for the commuter. Senate passage in February did much to encourage us to expect new legislation from this session of Congress.
- Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe considers improved urban and inter-urban public transportation our Department's highest priority. This is nothing new for him. As early as 1961, as Governor of Massachusetts, he urged the speedy adoption of legislation, calling for Federal assistance for local transportation systems.
- Program management and direction, which will shorten the time for delivery of on-street transit improvements, and make the most of new and available technology, is Carlos Villarreal's concept of how this new national Federal program should be managed.

- Joint projects by the Federal Highway Administration and UMTA are already under way. More will follow and the DOT concept of interrelated transportation development is a fact and is working.

The most unrelenting of all forces is the force of an idea whose time has come. At long last, the absolute need and the unquestioned requirement for city public transportation is a case in point.

Transit has special environmental importance now that President Nixon has said that factors effecting the environment and bearing on the national quality of life are to receive first consideration in urban systems plans and design.

New priorities for transit and a greatly enlarged program of city transportation improvements requires management to get it launched and a team capability to accomplish results.

Management has a particular importance to the upcoming large - scale public transportation capital investment projects our legislation will finance.

Our Administration is organized to be responsive to the transit needs of the cities as their rapid transit and bus projects are designed and application is made to us for Federal funding.

As you know, we are able to finance two-thirds of the net project cost of capital improvements, such as new buses, subway or commuter cars, stations, extensions, or whole new systems. Needless to say,

these proposed investments will have profound economic and land use effects on Dallas, Baltimore, Toledo, or whatever city that makes the move to a new or greatly enlarged transit system.

Federal financing very often uses the GO or NO-GO factor. It is essential that Mayors and transit operators get direct, specific and responsive answers to their project proposals. They can from us.

The whole field of transit management has been severely hurt because of deficit operations, failing companies and public takeovers. Who wants to work for the bus company when they could work on Apollo, computers or space travel? Transit hasn't attracted young managers or anything even approaching the cream of the free enterprise management crop.

Public transportation has its own direct and special economic effect on virtually every aspect of city life. The fare box deficit isn't the whole story. Far from it.

The accounts of transit need to be kept differently, with the transit fare deficit seen as merely another cost of municipal government rather than the failure of transit riders to pay their full fare. Off-setting this is the unaccounted for benefits of increased job opportunities, higher retail sales, bank deposits, commercial rents and all the other economic activity stimulated by good accessibility.

Good cost benefit analysis will, in fact, show that there is no transit deficit. More work needs to be done on this critical aspect of

the investment analysis that large-scale public transportation projects require.

We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it -- and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove-lid. Mark Twain reminds us the cat will never sit down on a hot stove-lid again -- and that is well; but also the cat will never sit down on a cold one anymore, either.

We have directed what may appear to be a disproportionately large portion of our total national transportation resources to highways. In many instances, hindsight tells us other investments might have been more advisable, were they possible. Our highways have given Americans a mobility enjoyed by no other people in man's history. Our reason for building transit should be to increase mobility and thereby increase the usefulness of all public investments, including our investments in highways. This concept of maximizing the situation and redoubling the mobility quotient of transportation investments will be the source of funds for much of our future needs.

It is the very high standard of highway mobility which we in public transportation hope to emulate with new city transit systems.

"Give us the luxuries of life and we will dispense with the necessities," meditated Oliver Wendell Holmes. Perhaps we can find the answer to the transit paradox here. Up to now, we have been able to afford unlimited in-city car use. Perhaps we can no longer.

We in the Department of Transportation have a special opportunity in that we are developing a national transportation policy and beginning the business of building an interrelated national transportation system. We are indeed on a very special course, a particular road -- an opportunity not to be missed.

George Eliot tells us it's them that take advantage that get advantage in this world. Our program has the particular present advantage that Americans have come to see the need for the kind of systems they neglected, abused or abandoned in an earlier day. Public transportation. They also now see the need for new systems. We have the added advantage that legislative bodies at all levels of government have also come to this realization.

Those of us who believe strongly that public transportation is the high road to better cities, however, follow Gilbert and Sullivan's advice from Ruddigore:

If you wish in this world to advance
Your merits you're bound to enhance;
You must stir it and stump it,
And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a chance.