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P 11/10/76

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 21, 1976

MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF SELECTED UNIONS
AND THE GENERAL CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION

Wednesday, October 21, 1976
Approximately 5:30 p.m. (15 minutes)
Waldorf-Astoria, New York City

From: Jim Cavanaugh

I. PURPOSE

To greet labor leaders from the New York City area who are keenly interested in seeing that the West Side Highway project is completed as quickly as possible. Also present will be Mr. William Finneran and three other representatives of the General Contractors' Association.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS AND PRESS PLAN

A. Background: Don Rodgers, who is Frank Fitzsimmons' man here in Washington, has been working with Senator Buckley and his staff in putting together this meeting. This group will support Senator Buckley in his Senate race in New York State.

Don Rodgers indicates that William Finneran of the General Contractors' Association is the key person in this group.

B. Participants: 10 representatives of New York labor unions from the constructions trades;
4 representatives of the General Contractors' Association;
Senator Buckley
(See complete list at Tab A.)

C. Press Plan: No announcement.

III. TALKING POINTS

1. I support the rebuilding of the West Side Highway. I have told Secretary Coleman to get his people working around the clock to get the necessary paper work completed so that we can move ahead with the project.

2. When I rode and drove that highway 35 years ago, it was old and broken down. It should have been replaced long ago.
3. Those portions of the existing highway that have been closed, that are crumbling and dangerous, should be demolished. I have instructed Secretary Coleman to process the paperwork and release Federal funds for demolition as quickly as possible.
4. The first demolition contract, estimated to cost \$1.5 million, will be approved within 30 days.
5. Demolition is expected to take a year, and cost \$3.0 million.
6. By the time demolition is completed, we will be ready to roll with funds to rebuild the highway.
7. The new highway will cost about \$1.17 billion, of which \$1.04 billion will be from the Federal Government.
8. This money will fund more than 100,000 jobs.

Fact sheet and Q&A are at Tab B.

Thomas McGuire, Operating Engineers
Kenneth Erickson,
Jack Messinger, Operating Engineers
Ed Cleary, Building Trades Council
John Murray, Plumbers
Richard Fitzsimmons, Sandhogs
Mario Campanella, Laborers
William Finneran, General Contractors' Association
Ray Donovan, General Contractors' Association
Jerry Tully, General Contractors' Association
Gary Byrnes, General Contractors' Association
Conrad Olsen, Carpenters
John Tierney, Lathers
Tom Reynolds, Lathers
Len Saffir, Senator Buckley's Office
Senator Buckley

NEW YORK CITY--WEST SIDE HIGHWAY
(Interstate 478)

Question

Mr. President, the West Side Highway in Manhattan has been closed down for over two years. The City has asked the Federal Government for funds to repair the highway but nothing has happened. What do you intend to do about this?

Answer

I am well aware of this serious problem. Something must be done about it. As I understand it both State and local officials support the rebuilding of the highway. A final Environmental Impact Statement was submitted to the Federal Highway Administration within the last two weeks. Assuming that it has nothing adverse in it, Secretary Coleman has stated that DOT will support rebuilding the West Side Highway and that he will personally expedite the action on this problem to the greatest extent possible.

On October 9, Secretary Coleman talked with Senator Buckley on this issue. He indicated that as soon as the Environmental Impact Statement is approved, DOT will support the rebuilding of the highway which the citizens of New York, the Governor, the Mayor, and Senator Buckley so strongly favor.

On October 12, I stated to a group here in New York that I will do everything I can to support the rebuilding of the highway, as soon as the Environmental Impact Statement is cleared.

As for demolishing dangerous sections of the existing highway, closed since 1973, the Regional Federal Highway Administrator is now completing the checks and forms to permit demolition to begin. Secretary Coleman has told me that he hopes the contracts will be signed for the first stage of demolition within 30 days.

JRH
10/21/76

NEW YORK CITY

WEST SIDE HIGHWAY

BACKGROUND

In December 1973, a section of the West Side Highway collapsed. Most of this highway, from 42nd Street to Brooklyn Battery Tunnel in New York City was closed.

The new West Side Highway or "Westway" in Manhattan is a 4-mile, \$1.17 billion project to be constructed largely on new landfill and is proposed to replace the closed and deteriorated existing facility. It has the endorsement of Governor Carey and Mayor Beame, but is involved in litigation and subject to much controversy. Congressperson Abzug and some community groups oppose it.

The Federal share of construction is 90 percent, or \$1.04 billion. Assuming good environmental impact statements, Governor Tiemann, head of the Federal Highway Administration, and Secretary of Transportation Coleman have indicated support for both:

- demolition of the deteriorated old highway; and
- construction of the new highway.

With respect to demolition, DOT has already prepared a "negative declaration"--that is a statement that demolition will have no adverse environmental impact. This statement is in the hands of New York highway officials. As soon as it is cleared and reaches Washington, DOT will expedite the processing. Note: Federal Highway officials expect a lawsuit in the next few days to enjoin demolition.

With respect to building a new highway, DOT expects to receive the final Environmental Impact Statement in mid-November. They will, again, expedite processing, but delays in final approval of at least a year are expected because of:

1. The stringent environmental requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council of Environmental Quality Clearing process (CEQ);
2. Environmental Clearance by the Corps of Engineers to permit fill in the Hudson River; (the Corps of Engineers has notified DOT that it anticipates it will take 2 years to process the required permit.
3. Numerous pending lawsuits.