

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 14, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF

CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR,
SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JOSEPH ALIOTO,

MAYOR, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

ABRAHAM D. BEAME,

MAYOR, NEW YORK, NEW YORK,

AND

STANLEY CMICH,

MAYOR, CANTON, OHIO

10:55 A.M. EST

MR. ROBERTS: Ladies and gentlemen, a meeting of a number of mayors with Department of Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar and Frank Herringer, the Administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, has just concluded.

The meeting was held primarily to discuss the National Mass Transportation Act of 1974, Bill S. 386, which was approved by a Senate-House Conference Committee before the recess, but has been held in the House Rules Committee since that approval.

Secretary Brinegar will have a statement for you. It is possible some of the other mayors may want to make a statement and then all of these ladies and gentlemen will be available for your questions.

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: Thank you very much.

I met today with a group of the Nation's leading Mayors at the request of the President. He and I discussed on Monday the importance of mass transit legislation in this remaining session of the Congress.

We have all agreed that the bill that is before us, which is S. 386, is the right and proper bill and what we are doing today is seeking the support of the Mayors and others in helping the bill get passed.

You may recall that it was in October that we met with a group of the Mayors to talk about what could be done and now we are back ready to pass this most important piece of legislation.

MORE

(OVER)

We have a summary of the bill that will be available to you after the conference.

The President has stressed very strongly, and Ken Cole said today, this is an extremely high priority matter and it will be so indicated in his message to Congress of priorities in the remaining weeks of the Congress.

Our **session** today was really to see what ideas they had and to find how we can go forward.

I have with me today Frank Herringer, the Administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and of course, we have some of our most well-known Mayors.

I think that we would be happy to take your questions. Perhaps Mayor Alioto would like to make a statement at this point.

MAYOR ALIOTO: I would like to say preliminarily that we are highly pleased with the leadership the President has taken in connection with getting this mass transit bill -- this public transportation bill -- passed before Christmas. We are very pleased with that.

The fact that he brought us over to the White House, I think, emphasizes his great interest in this matter and the Conference of Mayors and the League of Cities have joined together with the White House in making a really massive legislative effort to get this accomplished before Christmas. The reason why we have to get it done before Christmas is because, first of all, we regard it as anti-inflationary. To raise the fares throughout the country would be a very, very serious setback in the struggle against inflation. That is the first thing.

Secondly, it is the best means we have for conserving gasoline and for that reason, we are going to make a tremendous drive and I want to repeat again we are pleased with the great leadership the President is taking in getting this done before Christmas.

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: Mayor Beame, would you like to make a statement?

MAYOR BEAME: I concur very strongly with Mayor Alioto's statement. I think all the Mayors, as we agreed to, are going to work together to join in this fight to get S. 386 before Christmas. I am confident we are going to. In most cities of our country, if we don't get this before December 31st, there is going to be a fare increase and not only can't those who use the mass transit facilities afford it, but the other points that Mayor Alioto made are very significant.

MORE

So, we are all together, I think, in fighting this thing and I have every degree of hope that we are going to win.

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: One more Mayor would like to make a statement, Mayor Cmich of Canton, Ohio.

MAYOR CMICH: We are very pleased that the President has given his full support on this bill. It is a clean-cut bill. It is going to serve and reach out not only to the large cities who are in dire need but it will reach out to cities like Canton, Ohio, who serve a quarter of a million population in the region of transportation. We are certainly pleased, we have confidence that we are united to meet the challenge of getting this bill passed by the first of the year.

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: Thank you.

At this point, we would be happy to take your questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, is the White House going to work to produce votes in the Rules Committee which I gather is where the problem has been?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: The White House will work very hard. We started yesterday in a meeting with Senator Williams and Senator Tower and the White House staff is with me. Our Department is out there and we are confident with the help of people like you see around me today that we can get it voted out of the Rules and to the Floor.

Q The Republican votes, I gather, are the problem. Will you have more than one like you did last time?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: We will have more than one. We will have enough.

Q Mr. Secretary, is it true, as we heard, the President has indicated that if necessary he will make some phone calls from his trip to Japan to various key Congressional leaders during this fight in order to get your bill passed?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: He has told me he will make the phone calls from wherever he has to make them, hopefully, not from Japan or Russia, but I suspect even before he leaves he will be making some calls.

Q To whom?

MORE

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: Well, to the key people who are involved in this decision. Our strategy and request, as we have discussed before, is to see that the Senate moves quickly. That was the purpose of the meeting of yesterday and was assured by Senator Williams that that was what he desired, that the Senate would move on the Conference Report and a good strong vote in the Senate would then encourage the House to take prompt action. And this is what we are up to.

MAYOR ALIOTO: I might say, Mr. Albright, those of us from the standpoint of the Conference of Mayors are very highly pleased with the manner in which the President is stepping into this thing, and we are simply going to follow behind his leadership and we are very pleased about that.

MORE

Q Mayor Beame, even with passage of this measure the reported figures are still short of the operating deficit of New York City. How do you propose to save the 35 cent fare in your city?

MAYOR BEAME: We are going to take every action possible. We have a few thoughts in mind. And this bill is going to really come very close to resolving that matter and I am confident that with these other steps we will be able to do it.

Q You say, "very close." Does that mean a fare increase is not ruled out?

MAYOR BEAME: I have already indicated that my objective is not to have a fare increase.

Q Mr. Mayor, what other thoughts are you thinking about?

MAYOR BEAME: We are going to have discussions with the newly elected State Administration, and I might say, too, that presently, as you know, the Comptroller of our city, as well as the Budget Bureau, are going over the figures with the Transit Authority, submitted to see exactly how much is needed, and we will see how the picture is going to work out. But we are going to make every effort to keep that fare at 35 cents.

Q How soon would you expect to be in a position to say yes or no on a fare increase in New York?

MAYOR BEAME: I would say maybe a week or so after we get the bill out of Congress and signed by the President.

Q Mayor Alioto, you appear to be concentrating on the Senate, but isn't the real holdup in the House? What are you doing on that side?

MAYOR ALIOTO: It is a mistake to assume we are concentrating on the Senate. That isn't so. We are working both in the Senate and the House, and obviously the real struggle is going to be in the House. We expect an overwhelming vote in the Senate, nor do we expect any struggle in the House on the merits of the bill. There are just some jurisdictional matters that we think can be ironed out.

I think the bill on its merits is obviously so good that we are going to succeed, under the President's leadership, in getting this thing done. But the major concentration unquestionably will be in the House.

MORE

Q Who are you going to be talking to over there, House Rules or House Public Works or both? Who in particular are you going to concentrate on?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: We start with the House leadership of both parties and then obviously the House Rules Committee is necessary to pass the bill out. That is the number one endeavor, which is actually already underway. The President has already spoken to the leadership.

All of us are trying to convince the Rules Committee Members to give the bill a rule as soon as possible. Of course we are working with the House Public Works Committee. It is a very important committee to us and I will be discussing it with the Members one at a time to try and explain our point of view and the urgency for getting this bill out.

We hope to find the understanding and total desire by everybody that, yes, December, a mass transit bill before Christmas, is the proper and right objective. I think we are on the way.

Q Mr. Brinegar, you say you will talk with Public Works one by one. Have you started talking with any of them now?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: No, they have been away.

Q I know that, but there is a telephone. That is why I am asking have you talked with them.

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: I have not.

Q Mr. Brinegar, could you tell us what your personal status is as a member of the Ford Cabinet? Do you expect to stay on or have you been given any assurances you will stay on?

SECRETARY BRINEGAR: I think it is pretty good. I certainly right now am planning to do all I can to do the jobs the President has given me. Right now it is to pass this bill.

MAYOR ALIOTO: Just one last thing. I want to introduce a new member of the Legislative Action Committee, not only a very, very talented man, but he happens to be the President's Mayor as well, and that is Mayor Lyman Parks.

MORE

Mr. Mayor, we are delighted to have you with us today, as I say, not only because of your own intrinsic talents, but I think you might have some control over the gentleman in the White House as a distinguished constituent of yours.

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

END

(AT 11:07 A.M. EST.)