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MARCH 7, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF WILLIAM T. COLEMAN
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Secretary, you have your work cut out for you.

The policies and programs of your Department will play a critical role as this nation proceeds toward energy independence. Transportation accounts for over fifty percent of our total petroleum use. To attain the goal of energy independence, we need strong assistance from the transportation sector.

In January, I signed a bill making the fifty-five miles-per-hour speed limit mandatory. It contains tough provisions so the Secretary of Transportation can ensure strict enforcement by the states. The state governments will soon be certifying to you that they are enforcing the speed limit prior to future release of federal highway funds. Strict enforcement of the fifty-five miles-per-hour limit is essential. It will save lives as well as energy. I will look to you for stern but equitable enforcement.

You will also be working closely with my energy and environmental advisors to improve the fuel efficiency of automobiles produced in this country. I am determined to reach the goal of a forty percent improvement by 1979 in the energy efficiency of new cars sold in this country.

Another important part of our transportation program affects energy. It is the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974 I signed in November. I worked for passage of this bill in the last days of the Ninety-Third Congress and I am looking to you for vigorous implementation.

It provides eleven point eight billion dollars over the next six years for mass transit. This means that we will be spending in the next fiscal year almost seventy percent more federal funds for mass transit than we spent in the last fiscal year.

We must take steps to save the nation's railroads. The United States desperately needs its railroads to transport the vast quantity of goods in a fuel-efficient manner necessary for our economy to survive and prosper. Railroads are an important mover of energy, especially coal, and we will need to double our coal output by 1985. Railroads will play a major role in helping us to obtain our energy objectives.

Working with you, Mr. Secretary, I plan to submit to the Congress over the next several weeks very important legislation in the transportation area. I will propose a new highway bill which will set forth a revised highway program through the year 1980. Also, the federal airport program expires on June 30. I will propose major revisions in the airport and aviation programs.

Another important legislative initiative which this Administration will be submitting to the Congress concerns reform of the economic regulation of transportation by the independent federal agencies. Regulatory reform is critical if we are to reduce the rate of inflation which inflicts this nation. Nothing is worse than inflation caused by government requirements.

Mr. Secretary, I am pleased to welcome you into one of the toughest Cabinet posts in government -- and to wish you success as we work together. Now, if you still want the job, I will ask Mr. Justice Marshall to please administer the oath.

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