

MARCH 4, 1965

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

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THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 4, 1965

Dear Mr. President: (Dear Mr. Speaker:)

I am pleased to transmit to Congress proposed legislation for high-speed ground transportation research and development. This legislation will help us to bring scientific and technical talent to bear on an increasingly important area of transportation not previously subject to intensive, continuing inquiry.

The life of every citizen is influenced by transportation service. This vast economic activity not only absorbs one out of every five GNP dollars; it shapes the environment in which we live and work. Advances in our transportation system must constantly be made if we are to continue to enjoy growth and prosperity -- and if America is to be a liveable Nation.

The last three decades have produced great technological achievements in air and highway transportation. Commercial planes today fly three times as fast as they did in the 1930s. Automobiles speed along modern highways at greatly reduced travel time. The progress of our rail transportation system, unfortunately, has not matched these strides.

I believe the power of science and technology, demonstrated so well in the evolution of air and highway travel, can be utilized in the solution of other transportation problems, especially rail transportation.

Striking advances in intercity ground transportation -- advances in speed, reliability, comfort, and convenience -- are needed and possible. In the last 50 years, intercity freight tonnage has risen four times, and passenger travel has increased 25-fold. In 1960 Americans travelled over 600 billion passenger miles, exclusive of local movement. That figure will more than double by 1980.

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We face an imminent need for improved intercity transportation in the densely-populated area along the East Coast -- between Washington and Boston -- where travel is expected to increase by 150% to 200% between 1960 and 1980. Freight shipments during the same period may nearly double. Other such "corridors" can be identified throughout the Nation. Advances in the transportation of goods and people safely, reliably and economically in one densely populated area will be directly applicable to other regions.

It is clear that we should explore the feasibility of an improved ground transportation system for such heavily travelled corridors. The program outlined by the Secretary of Commerce calls for research on materials, aerodynamics, vehicle power and control, and guideways. Information requirements for regional studies and evaluations are to be defined and the necessary data collected. We must learn about travel needs and preferences, in part through the use of large-scale demonstration projects. New methods of analyzing the problem will be developed to give adequate consideration to the large number of regional and local characteristics which influence the performance, acceptability, and cost of all kinds of systems.

The task is large and complex. Evolutionary improvement in the existing railroad system must be compared to much more radical and longer term developments. Systems proposed must be compatible with urban transportation plans. The research and development activity will require the services of many outstanding scientists, engineers, administrators and business executives. But I know that we will find the skills in industry, in the universities, and in government -- both national and local -- to do the job. The consequences of beginning now will be vital, for experience has demonstrated to us that dollars spent in sound research and development produce benefits many times over.

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
President of the Senate
Washington, D. C.

Honorable John W. McCormack
Speaker of the
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

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