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Remarks Announcing Proposed Transportation Legislation

February 13, 1991

Mr. Secretary; a special welcome to Senators Riegle and Moynihan, Congressman Larry Coughlin; and let me just welcome all of you to the White House. It's great to have you here. And it's great for me to be with our able Secretary of Transportation, whose baby we are unveiling here.

Thirty-five years ago, President Eisenhower envisioned an interstate highway system that today is a reality. And his idea fueled development in this country for a generation and united the States as never before—economically, politically, and socially. So, take a look at any map in our country, and you'll see President Eisenhower's legacy for a strong America.

Today the interstate system is virtually complete, and Americans enjoy unequaled mobility. But in the years since its construction began, there have been major demographic shifts and travel changes in our country. And we have a remarkable highway system, but as Sam has told you and certainly told me, much of it needs improvement. And we need to move forward to meet the transportation needs of the coming generations. It's time to take the first step on the long road that lies ahead. And the status quo will simply not get us there.

Economic competition in the 21st century is going to be tougher than ever before. We can help build competitiveness and improve the links between workers and jobs and goods and markets. Already, transportation accounts for about 20 percent of total consumer spending. And we've got to find ways to expand our Nation's mobility for urban Americans, for rural Americans, and for Americans with disabilities who are on

the move.

So, today we're unveiling a blueprint for a national highway system. This map explains it. Sam has been, I understand, briefing on that here. We've designed new legislation—the Surface Transportation Assistance Act—to reform existing highway programs and increase funding for what works, to prepare for the next American century.

And to do it, we must invest in our future. So, we're investing \$105 billion in our transportation infrastructure over the next 5 years. Highway investment will increase by 39 percent to \$20 billion by 1996. And funds for capital investment in mass transit will increase by 25 percent. And we've proposed a 34 percent increase in funding for highway safety programs over the next 5 years.

The future of Americans' transportation rest on the new foundation that we're laying today. Building on the success of the interstate system, this bill provides for the designation of a new national highway system which concentrates Federal dollars on the rehabilitation and improvement of our most critical highways. It creates a new urban-rural block grant that will streamline narrow highway grant programs into a larger, more flexible block grant.

The legislation will reduce the backlog of bridges needing repair and replacement. It promotes efficiency by cutting redtape for the trucking industry. The bill also focuses attention on the needs of our cities, where millions of our citizens depend on public transit. Mass transit in urban areas will be maintained and improved. And under this legislation, funding for it will become more stable and equitable.

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Our approach will provide States and localities with flexibility to select which highways will receive targeted Federal dollars, and States and localities will be able to choose whether to spend Federal dollars on transit or highway solutions. As never before, we are encouraging creative new financing and management by the States.

This bill is a good one. And we believe it will draw broad support from all sectors: the States, the cities, the transportation industry, and the Congress. And as part of this administration's national transportation policy, it will move us into the next American century. With this legislation, America is on the road to expanded productivity, more jobs, and a strengthened infrastructure for a stronger United States.

Sam, you've been dubbed the "road warrior." [Laughter] I don't know whether it's just by yourself or by all the rest of us, but nevertheless, I—[laughter]—since you've already been dubbed that, I want you—and I see we've got some heavyweights here in the front rows—to ask

for their support. But I really hope that you can bring back a bill that I can enthusiastically sign this fall or perhaps sooner. I don't know what your legislative schedule is.

But in any event, I think we're off to a good start. And I'm grateful to you and the people at the Department of Transportation who have put so much of their hearts and souls into formulating this new approach. So, to all of you who have been a part of it, direct or indirect, my sincere thanks. We're going to work hard to make this become a reality. And thanks for coming over here today.

And God bless you all. Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner; Senators Donald W. Riegle, Jr., and Daniel P. Moynihan; and Representative Lawrence Coughlin.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on Allied Bombing in Baghdad

February 13, 1991

Last night, coalition forces bombed a military command and control center in Baghdad that, according to press reports, resulted in a number of civilian casualties.

The loss of civilian lives in time of war is a truly tragic consequence. It saddens everyone to know that innocent people may have died in the course of military conflict. America treats human life as our most precious value. That is why even during this military conflict in which the lives of our service men and women are at risk, we will not target civilian facilities. We will continue to hit only military targets. The bunker that was attacked last night was a military target, a command-and-control center that fed instructions directly to the Iraqi war machine, painted and camouflaged to avoid detection and well-documented as a military target. We have been systematically attack-

ing these targets since the war began.

We don't know why civilians were at this location, but we do know that Saddam Hussein does not share our value in the sanctity of life. Indeed, he time and again has shown a willingness to sacrifice civilian lives and property that further his war aims.

Civilian hostages were moved in November and December to military sites for use as human shields. POW's reportedly have been placed at military sites. Roving bands of execution squads search out deserters among his own ranks of servicemen. Command and control centers in Iraq have been placed on top of schools and public buildings. Tanks and other artillery have been placed beside private homes and small villages. And only this morning we have documentation that two MIG 21's have been parked near the front door of a treasured