STATEMENT BY UNDER SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN W. BARNUM
BEFORE THE SENATE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE, APRIL 1, 1974

The Committee today has offered a timely forum for all parties involved in the construction in Washington of a National Visitor Center and a transportation terminal to discuss how we may offer the public the best service. On the one hand, we are offering the visitor to the Nation's capital an information service on what he may see and do here. On the other hand, we are offering a prospective intermodal interchange to the various fast, safe and convenient ways of traveling to, from and through Washington. Indeed, there are several kinds of service that we are to accommodate within one defined area. And, as years of plans and mountains of paper have shown, it is not easy to determine how this can best be accomplished. But a complex can be designed to provide for Washington's unique needs in accommodating its several million visitors per year and the expected increase of visitors for the Bicentennial year.

The Department of Transportation, in the Regional Rail Reorganization Act of 1973, has received from the Congress a mandate to provide efficient passenger rail service between Washington, D. C. and Boston, which is called the Northeast Corridor. The Department of the Interior, through the National Visitor Center Facilities Act of 1968, has received from the Congress a mandate to provide Washington, D. C. with a National Visitor Center within the existing railroad station. It is becoming more evident that, in the long run, the success of one part of this service complex will depend on the success of the other parts of the complex.

From the transportation point of view, this whole subject raises the further question of the appropriate role of a railroad station. Secretary Brinegar, testifying on national transportation policy before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation on March 5, 1974, made the following relevant comments:

> A major cause of inefficiency in both passenger and freight transportation is the lack of close coordination among the various modes. This problem is compounded by the historical development of separate systems of terminals by each of the modes. A priority program is needed to lift unneeded restraints to intermodal cooperation and to encourage joint use of terminal and other facilities by all transportation modes.

It is within this policy framework that I speak today. The benefits of working toward intermodal terminals are obvious. For the public, intermodal terminals would allow a quick interchange from one kind of transportation to another under one roof. The particular problems of our aged and handicapped travelers would be substantially reduced. With a suitable network of such terminals, joint scheduling of service could be instituted among the various modes of transportation allowing convenient connections at common locations. Ultimately such terminals would permit through ticketing and baggage handling among the modes where a traveler on one ticket could check his baggage through to his final destination while interchanging between rail, bus, and air as his trip requires. The widespread existing intercity bus networks could provide residents of rural areas ready accessibility to a transportation hub where a choice would be offered for the continuation of their journey to a final destination.

From the standpoint of the public and private transportation entities, joint terminals offer the promise of lower operating costs through expense-sharing and the common utilization of necessary auxiliary services. By providing more coordinated intercity public transportation, patronage on all such modes should increase as they become more attractive alternatives to the private automobile.

The Department believes such terminals will allow maximum utilization of existing equipment. The highways, rails, and airports are there, but in many cases are not utilized efficiently. Finally, the joint terminals themselves are largely a matter of bricks and mortar which, based on long-term leases by the transportation companies and auxiliary services, could be locally financed with a mix of local public or private capital.

For more than two years, the Department of Transportation has been exploring the concept of joint terminals with railroad and intercity bus interests. I am pleased to report that they have been most cooperative.

More than two dozen cities nationwide have been identified as having potential for joint terminal development. Five of these cities are in our critical Northeast Corridor, including, of course, the city of Washington, D. C. In this context, then, let me return to the status of the Washington intermodal terminal.

The seed for the Washington intermodal terminal was planted by passage of the National Visitor Center Facilities Act of 1968. That Act provided for the conversion of Union Station into a National Visitor

Center by the Department of the Interior. The Washington Terminal Company, which owns Union Station, is required by statute to construct a suitable replacement terminal beneath or adjacent to the existing station.

Let me briefly review the climate when that Act was passed. The automobile was king; it was the mainstay of American mobility. Most people believed that rail passenger service throughout the Nation was moribund, and the railroads were seeking ways to get out from under the expense of maintaining monuments such as Union Station which had outlived their usefulness to train operations.

Since 1968, however, significant changes affecting all forms of transportation have emerged. We have seen the Penn Central, a one-half owner of Union Station, go bankrupt; Amtrak has been created and rail passenger service has been revived, especially in the Northeast Corridor; here in Washington construction has begun on the new METRO rapid rail transit system, including facilities at Union Station; and energy problems have provided a stimulant for our people to consider more energy efficient public transportation as a supplement to their private vehicles.

In addition, two major intercity bus companies, Greyhound and Trailways, have continually expressed strong interest in moving from their present separate and, in many ways, inadequate facilities at 12th Street and New York Avenue, N.W., into a new terminal. Indeed, they have supported the proposal of an intermodal facility at or near Union Station.

In an attempt to accommodate these changing circumstances, which would affect directly the general use of the National Visitor Center, the Department of the Interior, with our encouragement and assistance, changed its design plans for the Visitor Center to accommodate an intermodal terminal. Skyrocketing inflation, however, caused Interior to cut back the scope of the Visitor Center Terminal project. The difficult decision was made to proceed with construction of the Visitor Center while further efforts were made to reach suitable contractual agreements between the railroads, Amtrak, and the bus companies on the intermodal terminal to begin construction of the garage. Such a decision was in keeping with the Administration's pledge to have the National Visitor Center operational in time for the Nation's Bicentennial celebration in 1976.

There continues to be substantial public and private support for this terminal. In addition, Amtrak is currently faced with a level of passenger traffic that it did not expect to reach until 1977. And while specific projections are not available, the bus companies also expect a sharp rise in ridership, given a new facility enclosed in a structure with the other modes. The airline bus services also have expressed strong interest in coming into a new terminal with a joint ticketing desk in the main lobby, to provide service to Dulles and Baltimore-Washington Airports. Finally the Regional Rail Reorganization Act calls for "the establishment of improved high-speed rail passenger

service, consonant with the Secretary's report of September 1971, entitled 'Recommendations for Northeast Corridor Transportation.'" That provides an important new urgency to our efforts to undertake this project. We are now at a point of decision. Do we proceed with an intermodal terminal or not? And, if we do proceed, what are the options?

It is the view of my Department that, at the outset, the Department should take the lead in design development and planning as well as exploring the various alternatives for funding an intermodal terminal in Washington. We have an opportunity to provide for Washington's unique transportation needs due to the new Visitor Center and its proximity to places of interest, as well as to accommodate intercity bus and train service, commuter buses and trains, METRO rapid transit charter buses, airport buses, taxis, limousines and private automobile parking.

This is not the responsibility of the Federal Government alone, however. Private industry must be a partner in this endeavor. In Washington, both Amtrak and the bus companies have come forward with pledges of financial and technical assistance for this project. To exercise the needed Federal leadership and to strengthen the joint Federal and private cooperation, a major issue must be resolved--appropriate responsibility for this project at the Federal, local and private level.

If we were discussing merely a replacement for the existing rail terminal in Union Station, we would be quick to suggest that the major, if not the total, responsibility should rest with the railroad companies and

Amtrak. This is not the case, however. We are discussing the construction of an intermodal terminal where rail, bus, and airline ground connections will interchange with the city's public transit facilities and the private automobile.

There are shared responsibilities in this project and we believe the Department should take the leadership role in designing and planning this intermodal terminal. We will work closely with private interests in meeting this opportunity. In fact, we have been informally working with Interior, Amtrak and the bus companies for more than two years to arrive at an acceptable design for the intermodal terminal. Last June Amtrak and the bus companies submitted detailed requirements based on present and future needs. As recently as last January 17, Amtrak and the bus companies informally approved schematic drawings for the intermodal terminal.

Obviously, conditions have changed even in this short span of time. At this point, the Department believes it would have to examine a number of options to satisfy the projected needs of the various providers of transportation services.

We would want to review the facility currently planned for construction north of Union Station, near H Street. Other alternatives to more fully utilize the airspace over the tracks should also be explored. We would also want to discuss with the Department of the Interior and Amtrak their thoughts and plans.

On December 18, 1973, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 11763. That bill has been referred to the Senate Public Works Committee. It would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to lease the air rights behind and adjacent to the site of the Visitor Center parking garage currently under construction. If H.R. 11763 or something along its lines becomes law, we could both institute a study of the options for an intermodal terminal and present, and possibly implement, a program for construction of the intermodal terminal.

In any event, we think it appropriate, as Senator Hartke suggested in calling these hearings, that the design of the intermodal terminal be reevaluated in the light of any new information the carriers think is relevant.

Another critical issue is that of adequate funding. We do have a recent $29.6 million estimate on the informally endorsed intermodal design for construction near H Street. There have been significant pledges of money from Amtrak and the bus companies, as has earlier been mentioned. In addition, the Washington Terminal Company is committed to provide some funds for the rail terminal replacement. The Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration is currently assisting in the funding of public transit elements of the Visitor Center complex. All of these funds taken together, however, will not provide enough to build this terminal. The Department has not yet decided on a specific funding mechanism, or for that matter determined how much should be spent on

the facility. In any event, we would want to arrive at a final design for the area in connection with examining alternative methods of funding such a project.

I appreciate the opportunity to present these views for your consideration.