

STATEMENT OF JUDITH T. CONNOR, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT,  
SAFETY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE  
THE SENATE COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN COMMERCE AND TOURISM, RE-  
LATING TO INTERNATIONAL VISITOR FACILITATION, APRIL 5, 1976.

Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the U. S. Department of Transportation's role in international visitor facilitation. This is a subject in which I have been involved on a continuing basis for a rather long period of time. Prior to coming to the Department of Transportation in 1973, I was employed at the Department of Commerce on the Secretary's policy staff and in the Bureau of Domestic and International Commerce. During the early 1970's, as I am sure you will recall, the U. S. was suffering from a severe balance of trade and payments problem and at that time we were all very anxious to increase our exports and to enhance the attractiveness of the U. S. to foreign tourists. Prior to my government experience, during the late 1960's, I was employed in the marketing department of Trans World Airlines. U. S. flag carriers have traditionally captured a large portion of the U. S. citizens' overseas travel but have not been as successful in attracting foreign citizens as passengers. I was involved in trying to determine, through studies, surveys and visits to ticketing offices in foreign countries, what the barriers were to foreign travel to the U.S., particularly on U. S. flag carriers. During these years, I often dealt with the U. S. Travel Service (USTS) and with the CAB, so I feel that I can confidently say that the challenges of facilitation programs are now new to me. I might add that in my current

position as Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Consumer Affairs, I have been exposed to the many related areas of transportation that impact on facilitation. This exposure has presented me with valuable insights relative to the impacts of such areas as safety, security, environment, and consumer affairs on the Department's facilitation program.

You have indicated that you want to focus on "the total impact made on our international tourism promotion efforts by visa, passport, and customs requirements and procedures, and the quality of arrival facilities and receptive services at the U.S. ports-of-entry." Specifically, the committee wishes to detail "the statutory and administrative responsibilities, practices, procedures, and requirements of the several agencies of government whose activities affect international visitor facilitation."

Prior to discussing the Department's facilitation program, I would like to say a few words concerning the overall facilitation efforts at the Federal level. Facilitation activities have as an objective the movement of people and goods in a timely and effective manner. Many Federal agencies conduct activities which impact on facilitation matters although these activities may be only a part of their ongoing missions. Among the agencies which play important roles in international facilitation -- although their primary functions are not facilitation oriented -- are:

- The Department of State -- which has the responsibility for assuring that foreign visitors have complied with the necessary entry requirements of the United States.

- The Department of Treasury's U. S. Customs Service -- which has the responsibility for screening incoming visitors and their baggage to insure conformity with U.S. laws. Additionally, they are responsible for controlling or excluding the entry of illegal drugs, firearms, etc.
- The Department of Agriculture -- which has the responsibility of controlling the importation of agriculture products.
- The Health, Education and Welfare Department -- which has the responsibility of enforcing our health regulations and inspecting incoming persons for health purposes.
- The Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service -- which is charged with responsibility of screening all incoming passengers to determine if they are in conformity with U.S. immigration laws.
- The Department of Commerce's U.S. Travel Service -- which has the responsibility of promoting the Visit USA Program throughout the world.

Additionally, there are a number of regulatory agencies which impact on the international visitor.

The Department of Transportation's basic statutory authority contained in the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 is broad. It calls for the assurance of safe, efficient and economical transportation services. This mandate cuts across all modes of transportation -- air, surface and water. In other words, we are concerned primarily about encouraging the

conditions under which the provision of transportation services can thrive, preferably in the private sector. We do this primarily by providing Federal funding and technical assistance where needed.

Thus, our programs are largely oriented toward the development of adequate equipment, facilities and the institutional environment for the operations of each of the modes. I should note here, however, that with the exception of Dulles and National airports, we do not have direct authority over modal terminals.

Our safety responsibilities are, of course, our most serious ones, and a large proportion of the regulations developed in the Department are in this area. For example, the Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are almost solely dedicated to safety functions.

As a final characterization of Departmental efforts, I would like to add that our emphasis is also mainly on domestic transportation services. Of course, we do deal in the international arena, both with foreign nations, in the area of international agreements for travel, and with international organizations such as the United Nations and other international bodies, but this activity is secondary to our concern for an adequate domestic transportation system.

I have made these brief observations about the basic DOT mission primarily as an introduction to my view of the Department's role in Federal facilitation.

It is obvious that the fundamental objective of all this activity is to improve the mobility of people. The Department strives to achieve this goal through a facilitation program that emphasizes coordination and cooperation with other interested agencies and parties.

The focal point for facilitation in the Department of Transportation is my Office of Facilitation. Within the Department, our objective is to assist the modal administrations in focusing on intermodal policy issues and to coordinate their activities with other affected agencies. Because our facilitation role derives from the general language of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as I have stated above, it is conceived primarily as one of cooperative coordination, as opposed to regulatory enforcement. The majority of the laws that determine the actual conditions encountered by persons entering the U. S. are the responsibilities of other Federal agencies and in some cases State and/or local jurisdictions.

In our role as a program coordinator, we have initiated numerous projects and activities over the years including the publication of several reports and studies relating to facilitation issues. These reports and studies have been made available to concerned parties for their use.

Additionally, in the international arena:

1. We have supported, and continue to support, the preclearance inspection process wherever practicable. This process permits visitors to pass through United States inspection at the beginning of their journey,

while still in a foreign country, instead of upon arrival in the United States. We have had experience with preclearance since 1952, and it has worked well in the places where it has been tried -- in Canada, Bermuda, and the Bahamas.

2. We have worked with other agencies to bring into operation new techniques for accelerated customs and immigration inspections. An example of these techniques is the replacement of the old "three-stop" inspection procedure by a modified procedure which consolidates the immigration and public health inspection at one stop and the customs and agriculture quarantine inspection at another stop.

3. We encourage and support the application of modern electronic technology for the documentation and inspection of persons, as the most effective way to strike the proper balance between facilitation and control. Modern technology can give the individual inspector the capacity for quick and dependable verification of bona fide travelers without considerable delay. We understand that the U. S. Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the State Department are working on systems to develop this capacity. We believe that the installation of these systems at the earliest possible time is the most practical, single facilitation measure available to us now.

4. We have supported proposals to waive entry visas for foreign visitors seeking admission to the United States for periods of up to ninety days. Our interest in this procedure is founded in the belief that waiver of the visa requirement will make it easier for foreign visitors

to come to the United States and will remove a troublesome, psychological barrier to their desire to visit the United States. However, until proper safeguards can be found to reduce significantly the illegal alien problem and the threat of terrorism, we continue to maintain our reluctance to support changes in the present requirements.

5. We endorse automation of the passport document. We believe that the proposed passport book with machine readable features is the best alternative available at this time.

6. We have also called attention to potential facilitation improvements in airports. To cite one example, through our development of standardized signs -- employing symbols in lieu of words to locate traveler services and facilities -- we are developing a practical and cost-effective solution to a perplexing problem for foreign visitors.

7. We provide leadership and sponsor interagency committees whose goals are to solve international facilitation problems. Our sponsorship of the Interagency Group on Aviation Facilitation, made up of all agencies having significant facilitation interests, is an example of this approach. Through groups of this nature, we afford the industry and other concerned parties the opportunity to express, informally and in a noncontentious way, their facilitation concerns.

8. We provide leadership in the development of United States positions respecting the facilitation programs of major international organizations: the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Intergovernmental

Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), and the Inter-American Travel Congress of the Organization of American States (OAS). These programs all give much attention to visitor problems and provide opportunities for international agreements on facilitation solutions.

9. We assure that departmental facilitation projects and programs reflect the importance of safety and security. You are aware, of course, of our highly successful hijacking program. As a direct result of the required passenger screening and other related security procedures, which are conducted by the U. S. air carriers, successful hijacking incidents have dropped in the U. S. from a high of 33 in 1969 to zero in 1975. As a result of the tragic bombing at LaGuardia Airport over the past Christmas season, more stringent baggage clearance procedures have been put into effect. We hope they will be as effective as the hijacking program in eliminating these fearful events -- without interfering unduly with passenger flow. This type of action although requiring extra time to the traveler is a security program which has facilitation benefits; by assuring the traveler he is using a safe mode of transportation.

10. Finally, we have been very active in the area of certain special interest groups, particularly the elderly and the handicapped. Since Federal funds flow into airport development, through the Airport and Airway Development Act, we are able to require reasonable measures to assist the mobility of people who have physical disabilities. Also, we have studied the barriers to the travel opportunities of the elderly and

handicapped in the urban and rural areas and plan soon to undertake a study of intercity bus travel barriers.

In order to conduct these coordinating activities, we are in constant contact with the alphabet soup of Federal agencies and private associations. Among these are the USTS, ICC, Customs, I&NS, Air Transport Association (ATA), and Airport Operators Council International (AOCI). I'm sure you will learn a great deal from each of these agencies and organizations when they appear before you. Given our broad directive, and lack of specific regulatory control, we shall continue in the future to interpret our primary responsibility as one of coordinating transportation facilitation activities in the interests of the traveler. As such, our efforts may not be spectacular, because the production of international facilitation benefits appears to be a complicated and slow process. But we will expand and accelerate them to the best of our ability.

Before closing, I would like to make one final comment. It is my belief that the DOT role as I have described it is appropriate. The Department places extremely far-reaching planning requirements on all of its programs, including financial assistance programs. These planning requirements provide for extensive public participation, usually through the use of public hearings, in the development of local and national transportation facilities and services. We believe this local participation permits solutions to problems which are best suited to the local situation. In terminal areas, for example, we see the facilitation responsibility for

baggage handling, ticketing procedures, information services, and the like, to be the proper purview of local and private sector bodies. We will do all we can in the future, as we have in the past, to identify problems and to encourage appropriate solutions through technical assistance and coordination. But we do not believe that centralized regulations relating specifically to facilitation are either appropriate or necessary.

This completes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.