

Statement of Federico Peña
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation

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DOT Earthquake Relief Efforts

"When the earth shook and the fires raged in California, when I saw the Mississippi deluge the farmlands of the midwest in a 500-year flood, when the century's bitterest cold swept from North Dakota to Newport News, it seemed as though the world itself was coming apart at the seams, but the American people just came together. They rose to the occasion, neighbor helping neighbor, strangers risking life and limb to save total strangers, showing the better angels of our nature. Let us not reserve the better angels of our nature only for natural disasters."

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is my belief that these words of President Clinton capture the essence of the people of Los Angeles, California, and the Nation in responding to the quake on January 17. Everywhere I went in California I came across what I can only describe as heroic efforts to move forward and deal with the ravages of the earthquake.

My colleague, Mr. Gordon Linton, Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, and I will bring you up to date on our efforts to respond to the Northridge earthquake. I would like to briefly outline for you the highlights of the progress we have made and then my colleague will talk more specifically about the transit system.

- Before nightfall on the day of the quake, Federal Aviation Administrator David Hinson, Federal Highway Administrator Rodney Slater, my Chief of Staff, other DOT staff members, and I arrived in Los Angeles early

enough to fly over the damage area, review the major transportation damage sites, and speak with concerned State and local officials.

- At a meeting in the Mayor's office the day we arrived, we talked with Mayor Riordan and his staff and consulted with Governor Wilson by phone to identify California's most critical needs and determine how best to address them.
- Before night fell, we were able to let four contracts to begin debris removal and other demolition work necessary before reconstruction efforts could begin.
- Within 48 hours of the quake, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) quickly approved an initial allocation of \$15 million in Emergency Relief funds to meet California's immediate needs for debris clearance and demolition on Federal-aid highways. To date, \$350 million in highway Emergency Relief funds have been approved.
- By mid-week when the President arrived, work was fully underway and apparent to all, and FHWA personnel were already at work preparing Damage Assessment Forms.
- By the end of the week, seven of the nine major damage sites were completely cleared and within 12 days of the quake the first reconstruction contract was let on the Gavin Canyon I-5 stretch, scheduled for completion by June 7.
- On February 4, the Santa Monica Freeway contract was let, and we have recently learned that the work is scheduled to be completed significantly ahead of schedule and will reopen this week.
- On February 10, the contract to repair the eastbound section of S.R. 118 was awarded; the target completion date is May 21.

- All of these jobs are either progressing on schedule or ahead of schedule, and all will be completed within 180 days of the quake and therefore funded with 100 percent Federal-aid highway Emergency Relief funds.
- Less than a month following the quake, and after hours of debate, the Congress approved the Administration's emergency supplemental appropriations request. Of the \$8.6 billion provided in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1994 for earthquake relief, \$1.35 billion was directly allocated for transportation activities. An estimated \$0.5 billion was included in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) allocation for mass transit and local road repair. This congressional action reflected the will of the American people to come to the aid of those in need.

This outstanding level of performance by all branches and levels of government, community and business leaders, and private citizens has been the achievement of a true partnership effort.

It has been twelve weeks since the earthquake hit the Los Angeles area. As you can see, we have been working diligently during that time with California's State and community leaders in a joint effort to speed recovery work. With the timely assistance of this Committee, Congress provided emergency funds through the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1994, signed by the President on February 12, to fuel the recovery efforts. Additionally, on March 17 the President approved legislation to provide greater flexibility to California and other States in utilizing Federal bridge replacement and rehabilitation funds to seismically retrofit non-deficient bridges. With these tools, there has been great progress made in the recovery effort: reconstruction work is underway on all major freeways, and transportation detours and alternative transportation measures have eased the commuting nightmare that resulted from damaged transportation facilities. The limited repairs necessary to ensure the continued operation

of other modes of transportation, such as railroad lines, transit vehicles, and airports, have been successfully completed. Los Angeles is rebounding with renewed energy.

Before I discuss the details of DOT's efforts, I want to say a few words about the proposed National Highway System (NHS) that I transmitted to Congress last December. The NHS is a subject of great importance to this Committee. The earthquake, although obviously having the greatest impact on the Los Angeles metropolitan area, underscores the strategic importance of the proposed NHS to the Nation as a whole. The NHS routes we proposed comprise 4 percent of the Nation's public roads yet carry 40 percent of our highway traffic and 70 percent of truck freight. The impact of damage to a few critical NHS routes was therefore felt throughout southern California, and indeed, the Nation. Although a number of routes on the proposed NHS were damaged, the majority of routes survived the quake and play an important role in keeping the city moving, whether serving as alternate or detour routes around damaged facilities or linking commuter rail routes, mass transit facilities, ports, and airports.

The Department's Earthquake Relief Efforts

The Department's approach to disaster relief has forged a partnership with other Federal agencies and State and local communities. Within two hours of the earthquake, the Research and Special Programs Administration had the Crisis Management Center in DOT headquarters up and running, implementing our immediate assistance functions under the Federal Response Plan. Also, within several hours, the FHWA Division Office had a representative on site to coordinate the early response efforts. An Emergency Transportation Relief Task Force was quickly established to ensure a coordinated response for all transportation measures. The Department's approach is also proactive; a key goal is to ensure that goods and people are able to move quickly and efficiently, and thereby help minimize further harm to the California economy.

In addition to addressing the problems of the damage to Los Angeles' infrastructure, we also urged people in communities affected by the earthquake, including

DOT employees, to consider transportation alternatives, including public transit, commuter rail, buses, and carpooling, as well as alternate work arrangements such as telecommuting (flexiplace), compressed work schedules, and flexible work schedules. On February 9, I sent letters to each cabinet secretary and Federal agency head, requesting that each of them ask their employees in the Los Angeles area to also support alternate means of transportation and alternate work arrangements. The letters encouraged Federal agencies to utilize provisions in the Energy Policy Act of 1992 allowing employers to provide commuter transit passes of up to \$60 per month for employees without Federal income tax consequences. Many responses have been received by the Department indicating support for my request. We will continue to advocate these transportation alternatives in the hope that our efforts result in lasting change in commuting behavior.

We are also working with CALTRANS, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, Metrolink, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and affected local governments to increase capacity on these alternative systems. Mr. Linton will discuss the details of our efforts in that arena.

In addition, the Department is committed to speeding turnaround times for funding approvals, implementing innovative contracting procedures, and providing other forms of regulatory relief designed to cut highway repair times. An innovative form of competitive low bid contracting, called the "Cost Plus Time" or "A+B" approach, combined with the use of incentive and disincentive clauses, was encouraged by FHWA for use on contracts to repair and replace critically damaged structures as quickly as possible. FHWA and CALTRANS entered into an agreement which outlined how we would jointly proceed on each of these contracts. This approach permits the bidder to establish its contract time and encourages the completion of work in the shortest practical period. It works as follows:

- CALTRANS develops a short list of qualified contractors.

- For each contract, CALTRANS selects three contractors from the list and allows them up to 72 hours to submit their bids. The contracts are developed using the A+B approach, where A is the dollar amount of the work to be performed and B is the number of calendar days required to complete the project. A value of time is used for quantifying the number of days in dollar terms. Both incentive (I) and disincentive (D) provisions are included.
- The contract is awarded to the contractor submitting the lowest responsive bid. FHWA representatives were on-site to concur in the awards and allow the start of construction the same day of the award.

Using this method of contracting permits damaged facilities to be returned to use in record time. For example, the Gavin Canyon-Interstate 5 bridges were planned to be rebuilt in only 130 days, and the I-10 bridges in 140 days. The incentive clauses will induce the contractors to finish even earlier. Under standard contracting procedures, the reconstruction of bridges of these types would take many months longer.

In all contracting efforts, we remain committed to maximizing the opportunities for minority and women-owned business enterprises as we carry out the disaster and other federal-aid work in California. With Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) participating in \$15 million--38 percent--of the Los Angeles earthquake clean-up and repair work, the program achieved new and higher levels of participation than ever before. In addition, the Department has shown financial commitment to the bonding assistance and short-term lending program. DOT has targeted \$2 million for its lending program for working capital and \$3 million for the DBE bonding program for Los Angeles. To date, this special initiative for the L.A. disaster efforts has resulted in the issuance of three bid/payment/performance bonds for \$770,000 in contracts and has qualified one DBE as bond ready for over \$1.0 million in contracts. Seven loans have been approved for over \$2.1 million. FHWA is providing technical and financial

assistance through its DBE Supportive Service program to CALTRANS to assist DBEs that want to participate in the lending and bonding programs. FHWA has approved an additional \$500,000 through our annual allocation of DBE Supportive Services money to help fund a statewide bonding effort.

Traffic management is essential to minimize the disruption in the movement of people and goods throughout the Los Angeles area. Following the quake, FHWA and CALTRANS engineers developed innovative traffic management solutions, including high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes striped to establish priority for vehicles carrying at least two people. On the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10), the average travel time through the quake-damaged section of the corridor was 30 minutes; before the quake, this same trip took only 6 minutes. The HOV lane on I-10 has reduced the half-hour travel time of carpoolers, vanpoolers, and bus riders by one-third. I understand that this HOV lane is working so well that HOV usage has now more than doubled since late January.

The Santa Monica Freeway is also the site of an advanced Intelligent Vehicle-Highway Systems traffic management project called the "Smart Corridor" which FHWA has been promoting and supporting since the late 1980's. The objectives of the project are to relieve congestion, help prevent accidents, reduce fuel consumption, and improve air quality. To accomplish this, the project uses advanced technology to advise travelers of current highway conditions and alternate routes with changeable message signs and highway advisory radio. Another traffic management measure that has played a significant role in minimizing the traffic disruption resulting from the quake is the Los Angeles Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control System (ATSAC). The ATSAC system is a computerized traffic control system which automatically adjusts signal timing plans to reflect changing traffic conditions, locates signal equipment malfunctions, and identifies and responds to unusual traffic conditions. In operation in Los Angeles for almost 10 years, the ATSAC system covers over 1200 intersections, including those in the Santa Monica corridor. The ATSAC system has been invaluable in the weeks

following the quake -- enabling city streets to accommodate the unusually heavy volumes of traffic **detoured** from damaged freeways.

Not **only** does the Department respond in the short term with immediate assistance after a natural disaster, we also have programs that address the long term, **i.e.**, earthquake preparedness. We continue to aggressively explore ways to reduce the long range seismic vulnerability of our Nation's transportation system through our Long Range Seismic Safety Program. One objective is to enhance seismic awareness among transportation managers who may not be fully aware of the degree to which their systems may be vulnerable to seismic damage. The Department has developed a primer that introduces transportation managers to the concepts of seismic safety and risk reduction.

DOT has also issued regulations establishing seismic design requirements for DOT-sponsored new buildings. DOT and other agencies are developing a program to guide the retrofit of existing government buildings. In addition, the FHWA has been conducting research on seismic design and retrofit for over 20 years, exploring how to make highways less vulnerable to earthquakes. We are also cooperating with CALTRANS for the conduct of a \$500,000 forensic research study so that lessons learned from this earthquake can rapidly improve engineering practice. The Department's National Highway Institute at the Turner Fairbank Highway Research Center offers several courses to State departments of transportation in the areas of seismic design of highway bridges and foundations. A new course is currently under development in the application of retrofit practices to a wide variety of structure designs.

Conclusion

January's earthquake, in crippling the transportation system throughout the Los Angeles area, served as a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of our infrastructure to natural disasters and of the need to do everything we can to increase our preparedness for such events. One lesson we learned from this quake is that the damage to the transportation network in one region can have far-reaching consequences due to the

national significance of the routes that were damaged. Because all of the major routes damaged by the quake are on the proposed National Highway System, they serve as critical links between several different transportation modes in the area and also between California and the rest of the Nation. When these routes were damaged, commerce throughout the Nation felt the blow, in terms of shipping delays and increased costs. The economic effects of the earthquake will be felt long after the debris is cleared, and the reconstruction of damaged homes, businesses, and highways is underway. Prudence and mobility and environmental considerations suggest that we must continue to employ the tools that we have used so successfully in these weeks immediately following the quake, such as increased use of public transportation, carpools, and telecommuting.

We also learned that seismic retrofitting works, yet we realize that no man-made structure can be earthquake-proof. Fortunately, none of the bridges in the Los Angeles area that were fully retrofitted failed or suffered major damage as a result of this earthquake. Finally, we learned that the Federal Response Plan works. When we cooperate as a team with State and local governments, we are most successful in restoring essential transportation services.

I assure you that responding to the California earthquake will continue to be one of the top priorities of President Clinton, as well as for me and my DOT colleagues. I recognize that, although great efforts have already been made to aid the many victims of the quake, the recovery is far from complete. We will be here until the work is completed.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my remarks. My colleague, Gordon Linton, will briefly review the transit situation in Los Angeles, and then we would be happy to answer questions.

