



Milo D. Bryant was appointed Secretary of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet in January, 1988. A founder of Kentuckians for Better Transportation, Secretary Bryant has 31 years' experience in construction-related businesses and has founded six companies. Born in Indiana, he attended Purdue University.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday, November 16, 1988

Milo D. Bryant, Secretary
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

Kentucky's Transportation System

First, I want to tell you that Gov. Wilkinson truly wanted to be here today. He thinks a lot of transportation engineers and the people who make up this group.

I'm very happy to be here myself. Lowell, I appreciate very much your being here and the comments you made this morning. I think they are very exciting and I appreciate very much your taking time to come down and be with us. Frank Francois, executive director of AASHTO, thank you very much for the wonderful things that you've been doing. A special thanks to you, Calvin. You have done, and are doing, a wonderful job in the Kentucky Transportation Center and, over the years, Calvin has been a dandy when it comes to transportation. And a very special thanks to Bob Johnson, our district administrator from Federal Highway Administration. Lowell, we work well with Bob and we appreciate him and his expertise and his cooperation. Obviously, he doesn't give us everything we want or let us do everything we think we want. But, if he gets up to about 95 percent, I think he can continue on and be in a position to do a great job for us. Also, I want to personally mention a fellow today who was already mentioned and is on your panel, and that's our state highway engineer, Gilbert Newman. I'm proud of Gilbert, he's done some wonderful work in the five or six months he's been with us.

I certainly welcome the scholarship students who are here today. We -- the Governor and I -- are committed to increasing scholarship funds as much as possible, because we truly believe in the scholarship program. The latest count I have on scholarship students is 54 at the University of Kentucky, 21 at Kentucky State, and 12 engineering technologists at Western Kentucky University. I think that's great.

This marks the twenty-fifth year there has been a Kentucky Transportation Forum. When you have government, industry, and universities discussing transportation like you have today, you're discussing the future of not only Kentucky, but of America as well. I don't know what could be more important. The Center's action and commitment is the reason Kentucky, I think, has excelled and has one of the finest transportation systems of any state in the Nation. As Secretary of Transportation, I'm very strong on transportation and what it means to Kentucky, and I speak often about it.

Transportation is so important to economic development, to promoting tourism and education. We know it takes all of this if we're going to move Kentucky forward like this Administration wants to move forward, and be the leaders in education, and develop an economic base that's greater than ever before. These are our goals in this Administration.

I'd like to tell you about Gov. Wilkinson. I think his accomplishments in transportation are outstanding and his commitment to transportation is unprecedented. If we look at Gov. Wilkinson and how he feels about transportation, he's succeeding as a governor, accomplishing what other governors before him have not accomplished. For example, this year (the first year of his Administration), he will have let and started more projects in dollar volume and number of projects than any governor in the history of Kentucky in the first year of his Administration. I take great pride in being part of that. This fiscal year, with the help of Woody Mayes and other legislators, we had in the budget a record asphalt program. One hundred and twenty million dollars will be spent in the Commonwealth this year on our toll roads, interstates, parkways, rural and secondary roads. It is a record year -- the most dollars, the most tons of asphalt ever laid in the first year of a governor's term or in any one year of any governor's term. As you know, this means so much for Kentucky.

I want to tell you about the Governor's anti-litter program. It's setting new standards at maintaining the natural beauty of Kentucky. In August, we started taking down a lot of those illegal signs we've been finding for a long time. It's enhancing economic development and it's enhancing and promoting tourism. How can you expect to build an economic base, invite industry into Kentucky, and promote tourism, when our beautiful highways have litter everywhere, signs aren't proper or correct, or mowing is not being done properly? We decided in August to do something about it and we are, with the help of each of you. We're going to have in Kentucky -- not only this fall but during this Administration -- the cleanest highways we can possibly have, and I appreciate all the help of the county judges, the mayors, and everyone who is involved in this program.

I've traveled with Gov. Wilkinson throughout much of the Commonwealth to discuss projects. I'm going to call off a few. The ones I'm calling off are major, but let me assure you they aren't the only ones we're working on. If I don't hit your favorite road or project, that doesn't mean it's not important to us.

Just recently, we announced that we're committed to the completion of US-23 from Prestonsburg to Paintsville. We're also committed to the completion of the Watterson Expressway. We'll have a letting on four sections in 1989 in order to get it completed.

We're committed to building four major bridges across the Ohio River in Kentucky. We're committed (and we have feasibility studies ongoing), if possible, to build two major toll roads in Kentucky, each at a cost of approximately \$200 million. We're committed to building most of US-127 from northern Kentucky to the Tennessee line, and certainly we're committed to finish the AA Highway, US-25E, and US-119.

There are many, many more projects this Administration is committed to in addition to continuing on with this asphalt program and the other programs that we all know so well.

Gov. Wilkinson is committed to the county bridge replacement program. Many of you here today have discussed this with me. Gilbert Newman heads up the task force and they have submitted their proposal to me. I understand it and hope to present it to the Governor in December and, hopefully, in another couple of weeks we'll have a chance to get together.

I hope in early 1989, we will be able to sit down with our county officials and everyone who should be involved and present a workable county bridge program. We want to replace 13-ton bridges that are 50 feet in length. School buses now can't get across these bridges and it means our school children must take 30 to 40 minutes extra time each morning and night to get home. I think it's time we do something about that. We're going to do it properly and we're looking for the funds with which to do it properly. I predict we'll get the project underway and I think we can replace 150, possibly 200, of these bridges each year. We can overcome having approximately 1,560 deficient bridges in Kentucky. The next time we have a General Assembly meeting, we will not have those legislators saying, "Secretary, you're wanting money for roads, but I have wanted a bridge built for 30 years so our children can take the school bus to school and not have to bypass these bridges."

The Governor is moving forward on things of which each of you should be proud and things of which I'm proud.

Speaking of school children, as we were a moment ago, the Governor's task force is looking at how to improve the safety of our school buses. Much has been done. We have in draft form (hopefully, finalized this week to present to the Governor) a recommendation on how we are going to improve the safety of school buses. I'm chairman of that task force.

I know that Kentucky for many, many years is going to be looked upon as having the worst accident involving children in the Nation. But, I think it's our responsibility -- our opportunity -- to do something about it. I think we should take the lead and let the Nation look at Kentucky as having moved forward from this accident to being a leader in school bus safety. This involves looking at the school buses in the private sector, the school buses in our school system (both present school buses -- 6,900 of those -- as well as those built prior to April 1, 1977), and it involves looking at futuristic buses. I can tell you today, there are some changes

that need to be made, should have been made, and I'm sure will be made. Your children and your grandchildren in future years will be traveling in school buses that will have many, many more safety features than what we've had in the past.

We've had a very successful year, but there are still areas that need attention. Funding, for instance. Funding the shortfall of the AA Highway -- it's not easy, but we have no choice but to do so.

Our task is our six-year program. In our six-year program, we have \$4 billion worth of projects and revenues that are required, but (depending on revenues and a few things) we can estimate \$2 billion worth of income during that four-year period. A great concern has to be where we're going to come up with \$2 billion. These are things we're concerned about. But there are some good things.

Calvin mentioned earlier about our House Bill 665 on the weight-distance tax. Legislators are here today who certainly have helped us with that. The county judges and just everybody got involved. We told them if they would help us pass House Bill 665, we would make a commitment to enforce it -- and we are enforcing it. Time will not let me tell you all the things we're doing, but I can tell you that after the very first quarter of collections, we've exceeded our estimate by \$800,000 and, as of today, we collected \$21 million. I think the out-of-state trucks pay their fair share to use our highways and we intend to keep this enforcement going. I think we'll be happy when we come back to session in 1990 to report that we did do a good job and we did what we're committed to doing. We need those funds.

I'm concerned today that, through the window of retirement in transportation, we've lost many, many excellent engineers and staff. In the short time I've been there, I've gotten to know many of them and I have the highest respect for their abilities. As of today, we've had 593 employees of transportation take the retirement window -- that's a lot of people. Today transportation has approximately 850 fewer people working than when I took office. Approximately 58 out of 300 professional engineers have retired and this is a big loss to us. So when we talk about our engineering program and the things we want accelerated, you can see why we're doing so. We will miss those who took the retirement but we understand why they did.

So, challenges are monumental. Our needs are many. We have some problems and we have some challenges. But, with your help, I think we can overcome them and work with the Federal Highway Administration to make sure that we continue to be number one, or close to number one, in our highway program. I can assure you Gov. Wilkinson will do everything to return to transportation those funds that belong to us. I also have confidence he'll help us get additional monies, if possible, to make sure we maintain our transportation system.

Speaking of monies, as you know, a week from this coming Monday, we have a special session on the lottery. Lottery funds could give the Vietnam veterans a one-time bonus, help fund early childhood care, and programs for the elderly. I say to all Kentuckians, if you're against children and older people, we have a big problem in Kentucky.

We all know much progress has been made in Kentucky: unemployment is at a nine-year low, we have 45,000 more people today working than we did when Gov. Wilkinson took office. That tells you something about the effort of economic development.

The future prosperity of our State depends on the foundation we develop in forums like the one we have today. Both our State's and our Nation's transportation systems are at a crossroad. Working together as one, we can provide future generations with the type of transportation system we want them to have and that they're going to need.

This morning, Dr. Roselle said education and transportation go hand in hand and it's so true. I think we'd be remiss today if we just stayed on transportation; I think we also need to say that education is at a crossroad, not only in Kentucky, but in America. The educational system Kentucky has had for a hundred years has not worked. It won't work, it can't work. I think every one of you would agree with me, our six-year-old children are as intelligent as those in Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee. After they graduate from high school, I think they should be just as educated, have the opportunity that other six-year-olds have when they start school. I think we could take all the money in Fort Knox and put into our present system and it wouldn't make a difference.

So, the time is here for change -- change in how we educate our children -- because it means so much to the future of Kentucky and the future of our Nation. I want to tell you about "Martha's Army" because it's so important -- and, yes, it involves transportation. Four-hundred thousand people in Kentucky are illiterate, 800,000 do not have a high school diploma. Through a program initiated by First Lady Martha Wilkinson and called "Martha's Army", many people throughout the State are joining and helping to teach our people how to read and write, 400,000 of them. Some of them are 70 and 80 years old. I think it's a great program and shows we can make an improvement. The same thing applies with industries getting involved in programs to help their people get a GED. I think that's wonderful. I congratulate Martha Wilkinson and all the industries involved and each of you who are helping. What can be more important than education, as Dr. Roselle said today, in working with transportation for a better future.

I want to thank each of you for this opportunity to share a few thoughts about what this Administration stands for and what we're trying to do. It's been a joy for me to be here.