

*Remarks for the
Salute to Intermodal Transportation
October 11, 2002*

*(recognize Mabel Murphree; story of Jordan /
false alarm / 15-point buck)*

He had his priorities, and we have ours here today. Chief among them is the shared commitment we have to improving our states, our region, our country through the growth of our waterways and intermodal transportation.

Everyone you see here on this stage today plays a key role in that growth, and I want to thank them from the start for their dedication and service to our efforts. (applause)

Let's get things started by welcoming Don Waldon, administrator of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Authority. He has been working with the Tenn-Tom since 1975, and has served as administrator since 1984. I'm sure a great deal of his commitment to his work has its roots in the fact that he was born in Columbus and received his degree in civil engineering at Mississippi State. I'd like to ask Don to step forward and make a few remarks. Don?

(Don Waldon speaks)

Thank you, Don. Scott Hercik (HER-sick) is the intermodal transportation advisor to the ARC, working closely with public and private sector interests to help ensure the transportation resources contribute to economic and community growth.

A licensed pilot and a graduate of another MSU – Michigan State University – Scott lives in northern Virginia. We're delighted to have his expertise as he guides and directs ARC Mississippi's intermodal transportation projects. Scott?

(Scott Hercik speaks, then you deliver your formal remarks)

We live in a time like none other, a time where the economic competitiveness demands a new level of energy and resources. That competitiveness also demands fast, dependable and efficient access to the global marketplace.

The economy of the 21st century is going to be borderless, wireless and global. We're working to provide our children with the skills to compete in that economy, but at the same time we have to ensure we are also preparing the resources they will need to compete.

Foreign trade now exceeds \$2 trillion annually, and accounts for over a third of our national economy. As that global economy grows, so does the demand for new transportation capacity, safety and responsiveness.

Today, 90 percent of import and export tonnage moves along our inland waterways and through our deepwater ports. It's estimated marine traffic will triple in the next 20 years.

While the Tenn-Tom brings the benefits of waterway transport directly to our doorstep, railroads also play an enormously important role in linking northeast Mississippi to world markets.

This part of our state features two east-west mainline railroads that provide direct connections to seaports on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. We also enjoy key rail links to our Canadian and Mexican neighbors.

Today, trains move thousands of cargo containers from major seaports to and from markets in Europe, Latin America and Asia. Tomorrow, our inland waterways will serve as important new container gateways to our major ports along the Gulf Coast.

The global reach of our waterways and railroads mean nothing without a strong highway network that ties all the modes together into a single transportation system. This system will be called on to accommodate a 100 percent increase in goods movement by the year 2020.

Global transportation access means much more than ships, trains and highways. It's about economic and community development and, most importantly, it's really about jobs.

In today's business world, transportation and logistics costs can represent over a third of a firm's cost of doing business. For manufacturing firms, transportation costs can match labor costs.

As we strive to compete, transportation capacity and efficiency will often mean the difference between attracting new business and losing it to someone else.

Why? Because access to a full-service network of intermodal transportation can streamline costs to shippers by 20-25 percent – a huge competitive advantage.

More than ever before, global transportation access is essential if we are to compete and succeed in the global marketplace.

For northeast Mississippi, our waterways, railroads and highways offer powerful assets we can and must use to assure our economic vitality in the 21st century.

U.S. 78, the Tenn-Tom Waterway and the Mississippian Railroad all come together at this very location. It is the synergy that this intermodal partnership creates that is such a dynamic economic force for the region.

As we join together here today, we celebrate the establishment of a new intermodal transportation center that's a gateway to the world.

But, it's not the barges, the trains or the trucks that make Port Itawamba so exciting. It's the global vision that this new intermodal center represents, and it's the new important business activity and the new jobs that this vision is capturing as we move into the 21st century.

Today, we're celebrating the future of northeast Mississippi. This is our link to the world. This is our access to global opportunity.

I'd like to now recognize a great Mississippi voice in Washington. Senator Thad Cochran has served in the United States Senate since 1978. He has served with distinction, and we are fortunate to have him representing Mississippi in the Senate. It's my pleasure to introduce Senator Thad Cochran. Senator?

(Senator Cochran speaks)

Finally, I'm very pleased to welcome to Mississippi the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Mr. Emil (uh-MALL) Frankel. He has tremendous experience with transportation issues, experience he brought to his current position this past March.

His commitment to the growth of intermodal transportation is evident, and we are fortunate to have him here with us today. Please help me welcome Mr. Emil Frankel.

(Emil Frankel speaks)

(after Frankel speaks, Tim Weston will move to the podium and give closing remarks)