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Biden Celebrates Amtrak Boondoggle To Plug \$2.3 Trillion Infrastructure Boondoggle

“It is fitting that President ‘Uncle Joe’ Biden chose Amtrak’s 50th anniversary celebration to plug his proposed \$2.3 trillion ‘infrastructure’ proposal,” said Jim Tobin, economist and president of Taxpayer Education Foundation (TEF). “Amtrak is the gift that keeps on taking. It’s like going to the store and paying \$1,000 for a jar of honey. The product is sweet, but the cost is horrendous.”

According to *AP*, “Biden said he held annual Christmas parties for Amtrak employees and attended weddings, christenings and funerals for some of the workers he came to know over the years.”

“There is something seductive about the rails in general, and Amtrak in particular,” said Tobin. “The subtitle to Randal O’Toole’s masterful history of the rails, *Romance of the Rails*, is ‘Why the passenger trains we love are not the transportation we need,’ and that subtitle is insightful and prophetic.”

O’Toole notes that Anthony Haswell, considered the father of Amtrak, stated 30 years after it began that:

In that time, Amtrak has cost the taxpayers a lot more than \$20 billion...but that they have gotten back a pretty skimpy return. The trains were not only costly, they were slower than trains were 50 to 60 years earlier, and they were often late...I am personally embarrassed by what I helped to create.

And, Joseph Vranich, who succeeded Haswell as director of the Nat. Assoc. of Railroad Passengers, was unusually blunt:

From a public policy standpoint, there is no justification for the federal government to own and operate a national railroad passenger system that is essentially irrelevant to the transportation marketplace.

O'Toole points out:

Amtrak's share of the intercity travel market is miniscule. Automobiles moved more than two-thirds of intercity passenger miles in 2015, while airlines carried about 30 percent. Buses carried about two-thirds of a percent, and Amtrak was less than a third of a percent. In other words, intercity buses carry about twice as many passenger miles as Amtrak, while airlines carry a hundred times as many.

"It is time politicians resist the siren song of Amtrak," said Tobin. "It's a 19th Century solution to 21st Century problems."

Sources:

<https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-amtrak-business-government-and-politics-e2130be609402255a2b835c2c006854f>

O'Toole, Randal. *Romance of the Rails*. Cato Institute, 2018.