

TUA NEWS RELEASE

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PRITZKER BECOMES TRANSPORTATION CZAR, AUTHORIZES MORE OBSOLETE RAIL TECHNOLOGY

“Illinois Governor Jay Robert ‘J. B.’ Pritzker just can’t help proving over and over that he is the country’s most incompetent governor,” said Jim Tobin, economist and president of Taxpayers United of America (TUA). “Now he has signed HB399, a bill authorizing the formation of the Illinois High-Speed Railway Commission.”

“This is nothing more than a payoff to the labor unions and contractors who are using him as a tool to enrich themselves with taxpayer dollars. High-speed rail is a pipe dream, but a great way to squander precious taxpayer dollars building railroad tracks to nowhere.”

According to *Mass Transit*, “The commission will be responsible for creating a statewide plan for a high-speed line and feeder network connecting Chicago to St. Louis. It will be integrated with existing Amtrak and Metra services, intercity bus service and connect the Illinois cities of Rockford, Moline, Peoria and Decatur.”

Politicians are counting on funds from the federal “infrastructure bill” that would commit \$66 billion to passenger and freight rail over five years, and another \$39 billion to public transit.

“The study of rail systems by Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute specializing in transportation and land use policy, in his study, *The High-Speed Rail Money Sink*, makes it clear that high-speed rail simply is not attainable,” said Tobin, “but it sounds good and the politicians and labor unions love it.”

“O’Toole points out that rail projects are a source of political corruption as well as a waste of taxpayer dollars. As with any megaproject, high-speed rail is a tempting target for people who would illegally or unethically divert government dollars to their own political or economic gains.”

“If you want to know just how adept politicians are in creating high-speed rail lines,” said Tobin, “just look at the Chicago–Detroit rail line.”

In 2009, Amtrak operated four trains a day between Chicago and Detroit that went as fast as 56 mph, making the trip in 4 hours and 59 minutes. Michigan received \$598 million in high-speed rail funds, plus \$4 million in other funds, to speed up trains in this corridor. Ten years later, Amtrak still operates four trains a day between Chicago and Detroit that go the same speeds they went in 2009. Result: \$602 million wasted.

“In the 1800s, Pritzker would have enjoyed being a transportation czar, playing with this 19th Century technology. Unfortunately, we can’t send Pritzker back to the 1800s.”

Sources:

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/rail/press-release/21233749/high-speed-rail-alliance-gov-pritzker-signs-illinois-highspeed-railway-commission-bill-as-congress-debates-infrastructure-deal>

Cato Institute Policy Analysis, April 20, 2021 | Number 915
The High-Speed Rail Money Sink by Randal O’Toole