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Several transportation modes are necessary

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

I would like to nominate Bart Hinkle for the Rusty Spike Award. I never saw so much misinformation on transportation, especially rail, in one column; namely, his recent Op/Ed "Push for rail puts costs in the hot seat."

Let's be honest — nobody knows the bottom line because U.S. transportation policies, practices and funding are so convoluted, and the consequences so difficult to quantify.

I suggest that Hinkle apply the following test: Consider a transportation future that relies exclusively on building roads with borrowed money, both federal and state, until Virginia is covered with concrete and asphalt, from the Chesapeake to the Blue Ridge, and our once-beautiful Shenandoah Valley is paved over. Then ask: Is that an appealing prospect, and what would be the economic and environmental consequence of such a strategy?

For most reasonable people, the answer would be easy. A multimodal transportation system, including higher-speed passenger rail, augmenting highways and aviation, would be a rational choice. Rail is a good choice for part of the mix, and it is not inherently more costly than either of the other modes just mentioned. Unless, of course, one relies on the Cato Institute for one's facts.