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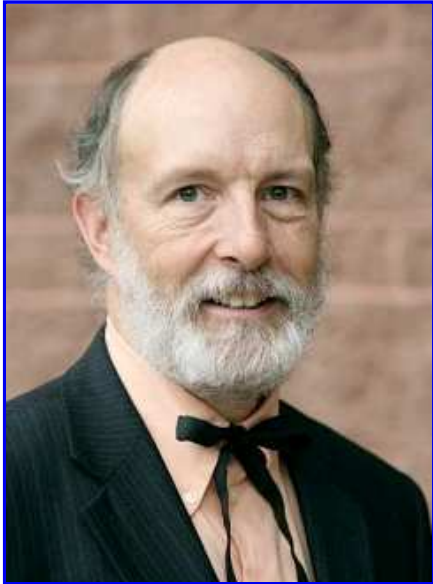
Randal O'Toole Sees Wisconsin High Speed Rail Reversal as Political Retribution

Though Nationally-Recognized Rail Expert Believes Obama Administration Miscalculated

MacIver News Service | December 10, 2010

[Madison, Wisc...] Plans for a Midwest high-speed rail network won't be derailed, even though two of eight states are out, a national rail expert told the *MacIver News Service* on Friday.

On Thursday, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced it would be reallocating funds for rail projects from Wisconsin and Ohio, because their incoming Republican governors planned on halting the projects. Randal O'Toole, an expert on rail transportation with the CATO Institute, believes there are more politics at play behind the scenes.



O'Toole

“I think there are two reasons. I think he [President Obama] wants to punish the voters of Wisconsin and Ohio for going

against his wishes,” said O’Toole. “The second reason is the Republicans in Congress are threatening to take back the stimulus money that hasn’t been spent. And so I think what LaHood is doing is trying to get the money to states that will spend it rapidly so Congress can’t take it back.”

O’Toole says the loss of two states from the proposed eight state network won’t hinder efforts to build the system. However, he predicts proponents will have to switch strategies.

O’Toole hopes Wisconsin and Ohio residents are never bothered with talk of high-speed rail again, but he’s not counting on it. He predicts advocates will continue their push, and will make it a political issue against Governor-elect Walker throughout his first term in office.

“In the eyes of the people who want this, Wisconsin is going to get its high speed train. It’s just going to happen a couple of years later instead of now,” O’Toole said.

O’Toole remains steadfast that this rail plan was a bad deal for taxpayers, but for now at least, Wisconsin state and local taxpayers won’t be paying to learn that lesson. He says the Obama Administration is hoping the project will be such a success that citizens here will still clamor for it.

“Now my answer is once high speed rail is proven to be a total flop, then everybody else won’t want it, and then we won’t have to worry about it either,” said O’Toole.

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