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Tea Party Coalition Calls On Scott To Derail High-Speed Train Project

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Saying they "can think of no better symbol of wasteful and unnecessary spending than passenger rail in all its forms," 29 tea party and patriot groups are asking incoming Gov. Rick Scott to scrap rail projects in Florida.

In a letter to Scott on Thursday, the Florida Liberty Alliance stated:

"You were rightly skeptical of the cost-benefit ratio of high-speed rail. You could take notes from New Jersey's governor, Chris Christie, who potentially saved New Jersey over \$5 billion in escalating cost overruns when he shut down an expensive tunnel project and returned \$350 million in funds already received from the federal government.

"Both governors-elect from Ohio and Wisconsin have signaled they would prefer to shift federal money allocated to building high-speed passenger rail lines in their states to more critical infrastructure projects such as road and bridge projects.

"Despite Florida voters rejecting high-speed rail in 2004, the Obama administration has promised over \$2 billion of our nation's treasure to fund a high-speed rail line from Tampa to Orlando. Even if the feds agreed to pay all the remaining capital costs, thought to exceed \$300 million, Florida would be required to pay for any cost overruns which average 40 percent or more. This factor would likely add an additional \$1 billion or more to our state debt just for the Tampa to Orlando leg of the route! ...

"Also consider that once rail is in place, Florida would be on the hook for yearly operating and maintenance costs. This annual cost would be staggering as ticket revenues for passenger rail typically account for a mere 20-30 percent of the operating and maintenance costs. Where in the state budget will we find such a sizeable recurring revenue stream? It would most assuredly necessitate a new tax on Floridians.

"Furthermore, accepting these federal funds for rail is a lot like checking into Hotel California because once you 'check-in' by accepting federal dollars, you can never 'check-out' without repaying the billions of dollars previously accepted and already spent. ... If we act swiftly, we can escape this financial trap with minimal cost.

"Governor-elect Scott, we are concerned that you may be influenced on this issue by incoming leadership who supports high-speed rail and commuter rail. Paula Dockery is on your transition team and has been an outspoken advocate of high-speed rail as well.

"We implore you to meet with members of the tea party movement to seek an alternative viewpoint on this subject. We can point you to policy experts from CATO Institute and Heritage Foundation whom we have been working with on this issue. We can tell you that high-speed rail will not result in congestion relief for our roads. We will show you that 100 percent of passenger rail systems in the U.S. are on the public dole and require new dedicated funding streams to sustain them. We can tell you that private solutions to transportation between Tampa and Orlando already exist that don't require any investment by citizens of Florida nor will they grow the size of our government.

"We would like you to reject the high-speed rail project and we look forward to the opportunity to speak to you on this and other important matters affecting our great state."

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