THE HILL

10 reasons to hate the bipartisan 'infrastructure' bill

Stephen Moore

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Sometimes in Congress, the most reckless spending bills bring both sides together. Republicans and Democrats join hands and vote in a bipartisan fashion to break the bank and run up the federal credit card. It's an iron law of politics that politicians love to bring home the bacon, whether they have an R or a D next to their name. The trillion-dollar bipartisan infrastructure bill that passed the Senate with 69 votes is one of history's greatest oinkers.

I've identified 10 reasons why taxpayers should hate this bill:

1. Fewer than one of every four dollars in this bill is for what most Americans consider "infrastructure" — widening roads, filling potholes and repairing bridges. Congress should be sued for false advertising.

2. This bill is the Green New Deal in disguise. More money goes for green corporate welfare programs — including wind and solar transmission lines — than for traditional roads, bridges and highways.

3. It excludes the Keystone XL pipeline. That project is FREE. It doesn't cost the taxpayers a penny and President Biden killed it with his executive pen, but he approved a pipeline from Siberia, Russia, to Germany. This isn't putting America first. Republican negotiators should have made Keystone a nonnegotiable demand. Instead they got bamboozled.

4. $50 billion for Amtrak. The government takeover of our passenger rail system in America happened 50 years ago with the creation of Amtrak. We were told as taxpayers that it would soon be economically self-sufficient and that profitability was right around the corner. Today, after spending more than $100 billion, many lines on the rail system LOSE money. Rather than pouring $50 billion more in subsidies into the railroad, Amtrak should be privatized. There is no law of economics that says railroads have to lose money.

5. The claims that anything is paid for are as phony as a $3 bill. “We’ve taken a lot of time to ensure that we were paying for this package, in a way that was responsible and defensible,” said Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) What a joke. The bill claims to “pay for itself” with “dynamic scoring,” as if government spending expands the economy. The senators seem to have forgotten a basic rule of economics: The government can only spend a dollar if it takes it from someone else. The bill claims sham savings from preventing fraud in the Unemployment Insurance system. That’s rich: Fraudsters have stolen more than $87 billion from the program over the last year, according to the inspector general, and now Congress has the nerve to claim savings by trying to stop the theft. It claims savings from allowing companies to put LESS money into their pension programs. Independent sources, from the Penn Wharton Budget Model to the Heritage Foundation, refute the claim that this bill is “paid for.”

6. Billions of Tax Dollars for Electric Charging Stations. I don’t recall the federal government building gasoline stations — yet this bill requires taxpayers to fund more than 10,000 electric vehicle charging stations so rich people with $100,000 Teslas can charge up their vehicles.

7. More than $10 billion for mass transit projects. The previous COVID bills ALREADY poured tens of billions of dollars into urban transit subways and buses even though ridership fell by almost 90 percent in most urban areas. In many areas, Americans walk to work more than they use mass transit. Mass transit accounts for only about 5 percent of all commuter travel. Some cities have found it cheaper to have taxpayers pay for an Uber ride than to put people on trains and buses.

8. This bill is a giveaway to the unions and will make transportation projects much more expensive. The Davis Bacon Act requirement that all federal projects pay contractors “no less than the locally prevailing wages and fringe benefits” inflates costs by 10 percent. This bill expands the union requirements. This explains why private bridges, roads and construction projects are often 30 percent less expensive than federal projects.

9. Infrastructure should be built and paid for by the states and by the private sector — not Washington. As Chris Edwards, an economist at the Cato Institute notes, more than 80 percent of the physical infrastructure in the United States — buildings, broadband, satellites, private roads, bridges, airports — is built and financed by the private sector. Of the remaining infrastructure, most is state and local.

10. There is NO infrastructure funding crisis that requires $1 trillion more in federal spending. Federal outlays on infrastructure adjusted for inflation over the last 20 years has nearly doubled. Throwing federal dollars at the problem won’t fix the potholes and make bridges safer. But it will help politicians get reelected.

Other than that, this is a pretty good bill.