

Fiscal responsibility musings

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Cars, warming, economy, etc.

I've argued that de-emphasizing the importance of [cars \(over bicycles](#) and light rail) by government here in Portland and nationwide is not a good idea. Cascade Policy Institute's recent study sheds more light on this argument.

Not all of CPI's concerns are shared by me and probably vice-versa, but [Automotive Travel, Economic Growth, and the Risks of Global Warming Regulations](#) provides for a more in-depth analysis of some of the concerns I've raised.

The paper is quite technical, but deals with real problems facing our economy that some imprudent types within the "green" movement tend to discount or completely ignore.

Al Gore—Global Warming's High Priest

Earlier this week, the *New York Times* had a [feature on Al Gore](#) ("Gore's Dual Role—Advocate and Investor") and his possible financial motives as they relate to his trumpeting of doomsday scenarios regarding global warming/climate change.

Serious questions were raised, though no drastic conclusions were. This article was more about Gore's motivation than [questioning the principles](#) of his mission.

Oh, and Gore has a new book out telling us more about the end of the world as we know it.

[More on Gore](#) and his relationship with business and global warming from *The New Republic*.

Railways as infrastructure

Perhaps more to come on this front, but [here is the map](#) of the Obama Administration's vision of a future United States rail network. What this fails to show is that, while high-speed rail may be important, if not crucial, to certain corridors east of the Mississippi, there will be little to no money spent on high-speed rail from a Chicago or Minneapolis hub to points west. Assuming the money is already going to be spent, wouldn't a high(er) speed rail route from the Windy City to the Rose City or Emerald City be money better spent than high-speed from Vancouver, B.C. To Eugene?

Wouldn't business and recreational travelers be better suited by significantly decreasing the 45 hours it takes to get to Chicago by train than to spend significant dollars on anything going to Canada or a minor outpost (in the big scheme of things) such as Eugene (especially with the college town as a terminus in such a route)?

To put it this way, one can drive nearly across the entire country in less time than it takes to get to Chicago by rail. (I've done the physical research.) The decrease in travel time from Portland to Eugene—unless it is on a UO home football weekend—would likely be negligible at best, taking into account commute time to and from rail stations.

Also, the Cato Institute's recent study, [High Speed Rail is not "Interstate 2.0"](#) is well worth a look. Is it really worth it at this stage to put money toward such a capital intensive project in the first place?

Portland's Purchasing Policy

Is [this the best way](#) to go about things? I get the thought behind it and I am well aware of the ideology backing it. Frankly, I think the City may even be moving in a somewhat positive direction with this, but shouldn't the thinking here be a [little deeper than epidermis level](#)?

Possibly concede that the Earth won't swallow us whole in the next 50 years and we still exist as the human race, won't such economic decisions by government—ostensibly on behalf of its citizens—compromise its constituents through ways that City policy doesn't address and simply or willfully ignores?
