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'Free market' group hosts Cato Institute analyst in talk on Boise streetcar plan

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The Idaho Freedom Foundation, a nonprofit "think tank dedicated to finding free market solutions," is hosting a luncheon presentation on the proposed Boise streetcar project.

Scheduled for Nov. 11, the luncheon will feature Cato Institute Senior Fellow Randal O'Toole speaking on Portland's streetcar system.

His presentation is titled "Debunking Portland: How Streetcars and Light Rail Have Made Portland the City that Doesn't Work," and will be given at the Old Spaghetti Factory in downtown Boise.

O'Toole, a native of Oregon, is the author of books on urban land-use and transportation issues and has argued for the repeal of federal, state and local planning laws to "solve social and environmental problems without heavy-handed government regulation," according to a news release from the IFF.

Helmed by former U.S. Rep. Bill Sali's communications director, Wayne Hoffman, the IFF has taken aim at the Boise streetcar proposal in blogs and letters to the editor in newspapers around the Treasure Valley.

The plan for a 2.6 mile downtown streetcar route was first fronted by Boise Mayor Dave Bieter in his 2008 State of the City address. Planners have prepared several studies on the project, and an application to cover \$40 million of its estimated \$60 million price tag with federal stimulus money was submitted in September.

The project has drawn criticism from some who say its costs outweigh its benefits, while others see the streetcar as a potential first step in a region-wide transit system, and a tool for spurring downtown reinvestment.

For more information on the IFF, or to make reservations for the luncheon, go online to www.idahofreedom.net.

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