

Shoup vs O'Toole on Parking



I often finds points of disagreement with people who work at the Cato Institute or the Reason Foundation, but that almost invariably involves a predictable ideological dispute where they think the government shouldn't do something that I think it should. The exception is the strange case of Randall O'Toole, who seems to be the only person in the whole Kochtopus who focuses on transportation policy, and who dedicates a remarkable amount of time and energy to trying to deny the obvious point that people drive so much in America in part because of the government's systematic interventions in land use decisions.

The latest hot front in this can be found in Donald Shoup's [evisceration](#) of O'Toole's views on minimum parking regulations. I recommend that you read the whole thing. But a quick summary is that O'Toole seems to have somehow persuaded himself that regulatory parking mandates don't lead to artificially cheap parking and that artificially cheap parking doesn't lead to artificially high quantities of driving. And he's supposed to be the libertarian in this argument!

To dodge a strawpoint or two, obviously the main reason there's a lot more driving in 2010 than in 1910 is that cars were invented and they're a useful technology. And the main reason many people live in low-density environments is that many people enjoy that lifestyle. The point, however, is that there would be *less* driving (even among people who go everywhere in their car—distances would be shorter) absent these mandates. Similarly, the main reason that many metropolitan areas contain nearly *zero* examples of transit-oriented walkable urbanism is that in the postwar period it's been generally *illegal* to build such neighborhoods.