

TheWashCycle

Cato Institute Calls Bikestation a \$4M Bike Rack

On the [Cato @ Liberty](#) blog, budget expert [Tad DeHaven](#) (who used to work for the bizarro-Blumenauer Senator [Tom Coburn](#)) called the Bikestation at Union Station a \$4 million bike rack. ([tip](#))

Whatever the figure, at a cost of \$4 million, it comes out to around \$25-\$30 thousand per bike. And, yes, I recognize that the “1,700-square-foot building west of the station will also have changing rooms, personal lockers, a bike repair shop and a retail store that will sell drinks and bike accessories.” But the ultimate

purpose is to hold bikes. In my mind, the extra extravagance merely reflects the fact that taxpayers are picking up the tab.

This led to a [back](#)

I look forward to the day when the Cato Institute does a blog post denouncing each and every publicly financed parking lot or garage in the United States of America. Somehow I think that if we equalized public funding for car park and bike parking at \$0 that would on net work to the advantage of non-drivers.

and [forth](#)

I denounce each and every *federally* financed parking lot or garage in the United States of America *on non-federal property*. I’m one of those quaint individuals who recognizes that the Constitution grants the federal government specific enumerated powers. Using federal tax dollars to finance local parking garages, lots, bike centers and racks is not one of the powers granted to the federal government. So let me rephrase my statement from yesterday: Look, I harbor no animosity against [car drivers], but under what authority — legal or moral — does the federal government tax me in order to build [parking garages or lots] for parochial, special interests?

between him and Matthew Yglesias. [Yglesias](#) points out that though DeHaven says he denounces all of these things, in actuality he's only denounced the \$4M Bikestation, not the hundreds of millions of federal dollars used to build parking garages.

I find it odd that he's specifically bothered that it's on non-federal property. It's in downtown DC. The whole area is practically federal property. Many, if not most, of the people who will use it will be federal employees. Is he saying that if were across the street on the parking lot between E and Massachusetts - a federally owned parking lot, he would have no problem with it? You know what, don't answer that, because the owner of the land that this bike parking facility **IS** on is - that's right - the good old United States of America (under the care of the Department of Transportation)*. So much for his Constitutional complaints.

So why again is he bothered that the Federal government paid for 80% of a Bikestation on a piece of land it owns, that will probably be used by a large number of its employees? He also thinks it's inefficient.



Isn't it possible, *just possible*, that a bike center **with even more racks** could have been built for a lot less? Isn't that the question that people like Yglesias, who want more people on bikes and less in cars, should be asking?

It's possible. Chicago's houses 300 bikes and cost \$3.1 million. But they built it on parkland (and five years ago). DC went shopping around and this was the only piece of land they could find for free - and it was in a great location. Once they had it, they needed a design that satisfied the CFA so that drove up the cost somewhat. There was also interest in having it be a greener - which means no AC or heat but using passive thermal controls, and be a showpiece for the nation. Again it's possible DC could have built a bike station that parked more bikes or cost less and built it at a major transit hub like Union Station and at the terminus of a bike trail. I'm just not sure how. But then I'm not a budget expert.

*according to the DC GIS data

Photo by erin m

September 22, 2009 in Bike Station | Permalink

Comments

Hey, when you argue with Tad DeHaven you run up against the intellectual might of someone with a BA in economics from Shippensburg University. It is futile. When Tad complains about Federal funds used to fund bike parking on non-Federal land that is in fact Federal land, what he means to say is that the Founding Fathers never intended for the Federal government to own train stations **because trains didn't exist in 1789**. Guess he has to spell it out for all you Ivy League types.

Posted by: Early Man | September 22, 2009 at 07:34 AM

Somehow I get the impression that if the parking structure was larger, Cato would be writing the exact same article anyway. Their main sticking point seems to be that gov't money was spent on bicycles, as if that was somehow incompatible with Cato's ideological principles.

Posted by: Lee Watkins IV | September 22, 2009 at 08:36 AM

Early Man, that is one of the funniest comments on this blog ever. You're channeling monkeyerotica.

Posted by: Washcycle | September 22, 2009 at 09:32 AM

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