

Collapse of the high-speed rail bubble

Randal O'Toole and *Gridlock* Save Taxpayers Billions

Cato senior fellow Randal O'Toole may have saved taxpayers billions of dollars.

O'Toole has long been recognized as a major voice in the debate surrounding American mobility. An opponent of top-down planning and publicly funded transit projects, he advocates market-based solutions to transportation that let Americans get around how they want, when they want.

In Tampa, whose transit agency was seeking voter approval for a light-rail project, O'Toole and transit expert Wendell Cox spoke to a Tea Party group in September. Local activists credit this meeting with firing up a campaign against the light-rail ballot measure that voters turned down in November. The momentum behind that campaign helped persuade Florida's new governor, Rick Scott, to kill Florida's high-speed rail plan in 2011.

Published reports credit Cato, the Reason Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation with doing the work that persuaded the governor to return \$2.5 billion of high-speed rail funds to the federal government. Since Florida was a linchpin of President Obama's \$500 billion high-speed rail plan, that action may save U.S. taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars.

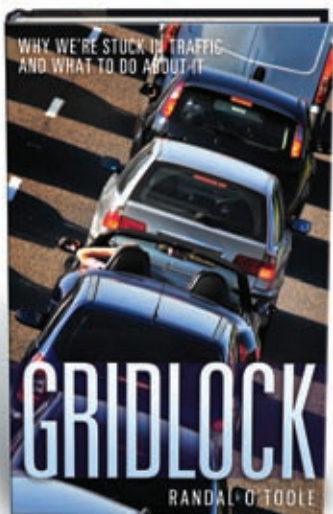
"Randal O'Toole is a very convincing fellow," the *Austin Chronicle* recently commented. "Spend about half an hour listening to him—as a packed dining room of Austin's movers and shakers did recently at the Headliners Club—and you may come away convinced that rail-based mass transit is about as desirable for a city as an earthquake, and possibly more expensive."

O'Toole also gave speeches in Madison and Milwaukee, and published a report on Ohio's rail project for the Buckeye Institute. Those efforts may have played a role in the decision by new governors Scott Walker and John Kasich to cancel expensive rail projects in their states.

When Cato published O'Toole's book, *Gridlock: Why We're Stuck in Traffic and What to Do about It*, O'Toole embarked on a 30-city tour of the country to promote the book and the ideas in it.

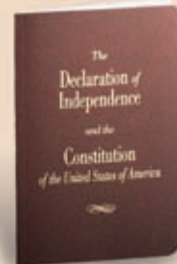
Speaking in cities that recently started or are considering commuter-rail service, including Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, Denver, Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, Portland, and Raleigh, O'Toole pointed out that the capital cost of many of these commuter trains was more than \$1 million per daily round-trip rider. "It would be less

expensive, and better for the environment, to give every rider a brand-new Toyota Prius every year for the rest of their lives," he pointed out. His presentations provided ammunition to transportation activists in cities where they are working to stop new rail projects. ■



Cato News Notes

THE CONSTITUTION FINDS NEW AUDIENCES



The Cato Institute's Pocket Constitution will soon be available to a huge new audience. In a deal with CVS, the drug-store chain is stocking the Constitution by its cash registers in almost 700 stores, from Virginia to New York. And reaching readers a little

farther than New York, the Pocket Constitution, in Arabic translation, made it into the hands of judges from Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the West Bank when they were handed out by Josh Blackman during a talk at the State Department.

THERE'S STILL A CASE FOR GOLD

Rep. Ron Paul and Lewis Lehrman's classic, *The Case for Gold*, first published in 1982, is widely available again as a free e-book from the Cato Institute. Paul and Lehrman served on the U.S. Gold Commission in 1982, commissioned by Congress to evaluate the role of gold in the monetary system. They produced a landmark minority report. Published in book form by the Cato Institute that year, the report covers the history of gold in the United States, explains how the breakdown in its use as a financial standard was caused by government, and details the critical need for sound money—where prices reflect market realities, government stays in check, and people retain their freedom. Download *The Case for Gold* at www.cato.org/case-for-gold.

COPS WATCHING "COPS ON CAMERA"

New Haven, Connecticut, announced an important new police policy in March—and the Cato Institute played a featured role. With General Order 311, the city declared that citizens should no longer be arrested for using their cameras to record police actions in public. To train officers in this change, assistant chief Tobin Hensgen played "Cops on Camera." That video, a project of the Cato Institute, released in September 2010, already has over 100,000 views on YouTube. "If a citizen wants to exercise his First Amendment rights and photograph you while you're in a squad car and uniform or on detail while you're performing your duties, as long as they're legal, you have no expectation of privacy," Hensgen said. We couldn't have said it better ourselves.