

United States Senate

August 5, 2025

Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

Thank you so much for finally unburying the billion dollar boondoggle report required by a provision of law I authored (Section 11319 of Public Law 117-58). The Biden administration withheld this report for two-and-half years, and now we know why.

Taxpayers also appreciate your leadership canceling funding for California's High Speed Rail project, which will save \$4 billion.

DOT's very thorough review of this gravy train sets a new gold standard in accountability. The 315-page document details countless examples of how the project failed to meet the terms of its federal grant awards, from "missed deadlines, budget shortfalls, and overrepresentation of projected ridership" to "a trail of project delays, mismanagement, waste, and skyrocketing costs."¹

I would encourage a similar level of scrutiny be brought to the other overdue and overbudget projects on the list required by my boondoggle law. Four of these are collectively receiving **\$4.5 billion** from DOT and taxpayers:

Project	Department of Transportation Dollars
Honolulu Rail Transit, Hawaii	\$1,941,400,000
Purple Line Transit, Maryland	\$1,006,000,000
Transbay Corridor Core Capacity, California	\$1,335,730,000
Queens Railroad Project, New York	\$294,781,579

¹ "Trump's Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Releases Report Exposing No Viable Path Forward for California's High-Speed Rail Boondoggle," U.S. Department of Transportation, June 4, 2025; <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/trumps-transportation-secretary-sean-p-duffy-releases-report-exposing-no-viable-path>.

Correspondence from Federal Railroad Administration Acting Administrator Drew Feeley to California High-Speed Rail Authority Chief Executive Officer Ian Choudri, "Notice of Proposed Determination," U.S. Department of Transportation, June 4, 2025; <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-06/FRA%20Letter%20%20Enclosure%20to%20Mr.%20Ian%20Choudri%206.4.25.pdf>.

Additionally, the boondoggle report omitted three other projects that are overbudget and behind schedule to which DOT has committed **\$9.4 billion** of taxpayer money:

Project	Department of Transportation Dollars
Subway extension to Silicon Valley, California	\$5,098,242,571
San Francisco Transit Center, California	\$3,380,000,000
Minneapolis Light Rail, Minnesota	\$938,690,000

If these can't be salvaged with better management, they too should be canceled. The **\$14 billion** saved could be redirected towards higher priority transportation needs or rescinded to help pay down our \$37 trillion national debt.

Since my law requires an annual boondoggle report, taxpayers and lawmakers would greatly benefit if a higher level of detail was included in future installments.

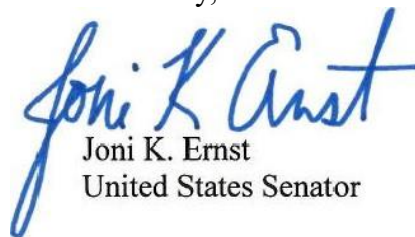
While DOT's overview of the California's High Speed Rail was over 300-pages long, the list of 14 projects prepared to comply with my law is compressed into a simple, one-page chart. The information provided glosses over significant contributing factors to the cost increases and schedule delays. It also omits over budget and behind schedule DOD-supported projects, like the three I mentioned above.

Despite lacking details, simply having this list of boondoggles, with names, locations, and dollar amounts, allows us to take actions necessary to protect taxpayers.

Again, I deeply appreciate your intervention shaking this report loose. I look forward to working with you getting the number of projects listed in future reports down to zero, by whatever means necessary.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance with your efforts and thank you for your dedication and service.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator