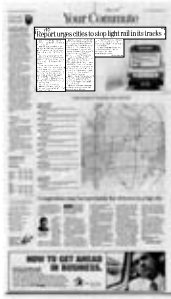




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## 180 Report urges cities to stop light rail in its tracks

Are commuter trains and light-rail lines a traffic cure or a boondoggle?

Many elected leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth have pledged support for a regionwide train system that would connect six counties.

Building and operating the system would cost an estimated \$791 million a year and might require a regionwide sales tax increase.

That's not a smart use of transportation dollars, according to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, an Austin-based political institute. The foundation, which published a report last week titled *Great Rail Disasters*, is strongly urging leaders in cities across the United States to stop investing in rail.

According to the study:

■ Every \$13 spent on trains does less to alleviate traffic than \$1 spent on roads.

■ Many regions spend 80 percent of their transportation capital budgets on transit systems that carry less than 4 percent of the public. "This imbalanced

funding makes it impossible to remove highway bottlenecks and leads to growing congestion," Randal O'Toole, the study's author, said in a news release.

■ Trains have a reputation for reducing air pollution but, in many cases, are worse polluters than automobiles. In some metropolitan areas, including Dallas-Fort Worth, air quality would improve if rail riders were instead commuting in their own automobiles, the study argues.

■ Rail lines almost always cost more to build and operate than originally planned and wind up carrying far fewer riders than initially projected.

■ Death rates per passenger mile are higher on trains than automobiles and buses.

"Cities that have avoided rail should continue to do so; rail transit is a disaster," O'Toole said in the release.

To read *Great Rail Disasters*, visit the Texas Public Policy Foundation online at [www.texaspolicy.com](http://www.texaspolicy.com).

— Gordon Dickson