



Free Press Viewpoint

Widening U.S. 36 would boost towns

A study of widening U.S. 36 to four lanes by the Docking Institute for Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University shows what transportation activists have suspected for a long time:

Kansas, and particularly the 13 counties along the northern tier, stand to get a big payoff from the job.

The state would invest about \$1.4 billion to widen the road to a four-lane expressway from border to border. The 13 counties would reap benefits of nearly \$2.4 billion in the first 10 years, including \$1.4 billion during construction and \$1 billion from increased business, new motels and stores and tourism.

More importantly, 898 jobs would be created along the road as new or larger businesses feed on the increased traffic a four-lane road would bring. To an area of the state long accustomed to the economic doldrums, this could be a godsend.

The study bears out the fact that a better road would attract far more in business than it would cost to build.

Since the opening of Interstate 70 more than 40 years ago, only a handful of new motels have been built along U.S. 36 in Kansas. No truck stops. Few chain or local restaurants. Because the freeway sucked up all the cross-state traffic that once traveled U.S. 36, U.S. 24 and other roads west.

But many questions remain, including:

- Would traffic ever be heavy enough to justify four-lanes? Out here, right now, no. Back east, between Wamego and Troy, the road is busy enough today to need four lanes.

Illinois has an Interstate open to the Mississippi River, and Missouri will complete its four-lane road to the river at St. Joseph this summer. Then more traffic will start to flow west.

And federal projections show truck traffic across Missouri at 10 to 20 times today's. Congestion in Kansas City and Omaha will send drivers around, not through, these cities, and U.S. 36 offers a fast, straight, attractive route west.

- Will we ever see a four-lane road in western Kansas?

Someday, maybe 20 years from now, maybe longer, traffic will build. In the meantime, the U.S. 36 Highway Association, which paid for the Docking study with help from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and county commissioners along the road, supports a better two-lane road all across the state.

- Will Colorado ever improve its part of the road, more than 125 miles between the state line and I-70 at Byers?

Not any time soon. But just as Kansas will have to respond to a four-lane path across Illinois and Missouri, so will Colorado have to respond to a four-lane road to St. Francis. It will happen.

- Will bypasses hurt Kansas towns?

No. The study envisions any bypasses being built very close to a town, so business can adjust. Bypasses would be decided by the state and local communities together, after a public scoping process. On U.S. 81, for instance, Concordia rejected the idea of a bypass while Belleville has a road right along its west edge.

- How long will it take to get the job done, to open a four-lane road across the state?

It took more than 30 years for supporters to get U.S. 81 widened north of Salina. Finally, the project just took off.

U.S. 36 supporters, particularly out west, can expect as long a process. The important part is to begin.

And with completion of the Docking study, that has been done. The rest will follow, but it will require a long-term effort on the part of everyone along the road.

Our children and grandchildren will reap the rewards.

— Steve Haynes

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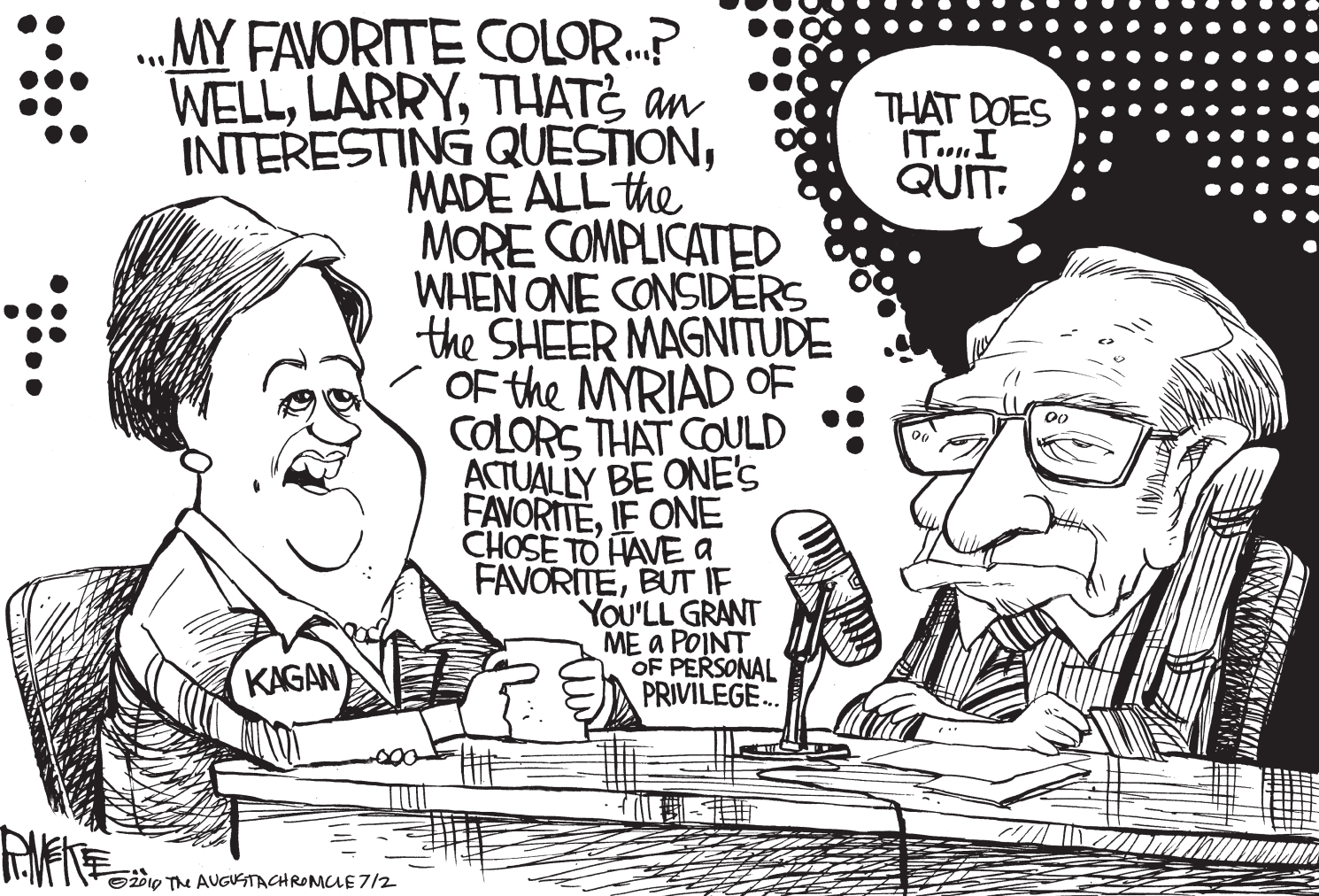
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Wind power increases global warming?

Efforts to reduce U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions by replacing coal and natural gas with wind power appear to be doing more harm than good.

A new study shows replacing coal and natural gas with wind power increases carbon dioxide emissions. Government policies designed to fight global warming by encouraging, subsidizing or requiring renewable power actually may be making global warming worse.

In a paper published at the free-market website Master Resource, electrical engineer Kent Hawkins shows when wind power surpasses 5 percent of power generated, the frequent ramping up and ramping down of other power sources to compensate for wind's unpredictable variability causes such inefficiency in power generation that overall carbon dioxide emissions rise.

For a good analogy, consider this: A driver who keeps his or her speed at a consistent 60 mph will get better gas mileage than one who frequently accelerates and decelerates between 45 and 75. The inefficiency of frequently slowing and speeding up is enough that the vehicle driving at variable speeds will burn more gasoline than cars with a lower fuel economy rating.

The same appears to hold true for power generation. Power operations in the Netherlands, Colorado and Texas switched some of their generation from coal and natural gas to wind power. Because wind speeds are variable

Other Opinions

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and unpredictable, plant operators were forced frequently to vary the ordinarily steady, constant generation of baseload power to back up variable wind power. Whereas a small amount of wind power generation helped reduce carbon dioxide emissions, those emissions began surpassing prior levels once wind power exceeded 3 percent of the mix.

If the proponents of federal legislation to force reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions are sincerely concerned more about alleged global warming than the accumulation of government power to hand out money and favors to preferred industries and contractors, these real-world carbon dioxide facts should put an immediate freeze on renewable power subsidies and mandates, and cap-and-tax global-warming plans. How Congress responds to these new findings will tell us much about the true motivation behind proposed global warming legislation.

The apparent failure of wind power to reduce carbon dioxide emissions should come

as no surprise, given the record of failure for other global warming schemes. Congress has long mandated and subsidized ethanol and other biofuels to reduce greenhouse gases, but studies show these biofuels create more greenhouse gas emissions over their life cycles than does gasoline.

Global warming activists are now racing to rewrite legislation to eliminate counterproductive biofuel programs. A better course of action would have been not to have enacted the subsidies and mandates in the first place.

In the lawmaking process, as in life itself, rushing to enact "solutions" to speculative problems before the facts are known usually produces more harm than good. Keeping this axiom in mind, Congress need not rush to enact carbon dioxide restrictions on the American economy. Total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions are falling, not rising, and they have been declining for the past decade. To the extent global emissions are rising, the fault does not lie with the United States.

Before hamstringing the U.S. economy with expensive mandates that may cause more harm than good, Congress owes it to the American people to get the facts.

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Mixed signals from federal educators

In February, U.S. Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan told an Emerging Issues Forum at the Raleigh (N.C.) Convention Center that teachers shouldn't "teach to the test."

His message — that schools need to spark creative thinking and move away from curricula that just teach what's on standardized tests — has teachers nationwide wondering if Washington's education czar is suffering from schizophrenia.

Every step in the No Child Left Behind standardization movement has turned teaching into an assembly-line job. Teaching to the test has become Job One.

In Texas, where as governor, George W. Bush implemented a form of No Child before becoming president, lessons were scripted to assessments. Teachers who valued creative methods retired in massive numbers. Half of the states implemented high-stakes exams, forcing students to focus solely on the tests. After they take the tests, students often ignore remaining coursework.

This new administration has done nothing to reverse this trend, and in fact is making the emphasis on testing worse.

"Race to the Top" money, the new template for the Education Act, depends even more on test results. To get a federal award, states must adopt common core standards, essentially a



John Richard Schrock

Education Frontlines

national curriculum for language and mathematics. This common core will not be optional. States that receive federal funding must adopt all of it.

States may add a total of 15 percent more content, but it won't be part of the national assessment. State input is irrelevant.

Along with common core will come a national test so that everyone is measured by the same yardstick. The feds are allotting \$350 million for the first stages in the development of the national test. It will probably replace the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

A national super-test will immediately produce teach-to-the-test curriculum for language and math teachers. Secretary Duncan's appeal to not teach to the test sounds hollow when his own top-down policies require it.

Many school administrators have already told their teachers to stop teaching anything that is not on the current state assessments,

and be sure they drill everything that is on the assessments. This is "curriculum alignment," and creativity is not on the agenda.

Professional development programs and grants awards give teachers a point for taking a workshop on implementing standards, another point for incorporating it into their lesson plans, and a third point when student scores go up. That is official promotion of teaching to the test, mandated under both state and federal policies.

Under Race to the Top, states will have to evaluate and pay teachers on how much they raise students' test scores, "pay for scores." Even a teacher's salary will be dependent on teaching to the test! Last June, Duncan took states to task if they didn't use test scores in teacher evaluations.

No, Secretary Duncan, teachers cannot abandon teaching to the test, or their schools will be penalized for failing to make "annual yearly progress" in test scores, and their pay and job will be threatened.

Just what part of "you made us do it" do you not understand?

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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