

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Amendment would protect taxpayers from infrastructure boondoggles

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) introduced [an amendment](#) to the [Surface Transportation Investment Act](#) that would relieve localities from having to pay back federal transit grants used for projects those cities later find are unsustainable. This amendment would have significant impact for Wisconsinites as it would save taxpayers from footing the bill for the city of Milwaukee's streetcar, "The Hop," which has operating costs of \$4.6 million per year in 2021 and a daily ridership in recent months of fewer than 1,000 passengers. The city is operating the streetcar at a \$3.17 million annual deficit, but the Milwaukee Common Council was told by city officials that if it didn't continue operating the streetcar for 25 years, the city would have to pay back more than \$60 million in federal grant money.

The senator's amendment would:

- Remove federal strings on grant money by forgiving localities from having to pay back federal grants for public transit projects if they uninstall the projects.
- Give localities like Milwaukee the flexibility to determine the best course of action and allow them to make prudent fiscal choices and avoid wasteful spending.