

**The New York Times** Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit [www.nytreprints.com](http://www.nytreprints.com) for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)



May 9, 2011

## The Rejected Windfall

After Gov. Rick Scott of Florida thoughtlessly rejected \$2.4 billion in federal aid for a high-speed rail line, he [claimed last month that he was doing a huge favor](#) for the national Treasury, which he expected would give away the money in tax cuts. That was nonsense, of course; Mr. Scott was really doing a favor for train passengers in the Northeast, Midwest and California, [which were given \\$2 billion](#) of his money on Monday for better service.

Florida voters might want to think about that decision as they sit in traffic jams, burning up \$4-a-gallon gasoline. In fact, some of them clearly have thought about it because Mr. Scott now has some of the worst approval ratings of a Florida official in the last decade.

He has joined other newly elected Republican governors so rigidly opposed to the Obama administration that they are willing to harm their states to score points. The result is a crazy quilt of state relationships with Washington, stitched more with ideology than reason.

None of the money in Monday's announcement will be going to Wisconsin, for example, where Gov. Scott Walker has also decided that his strapped state could do without rail improvements and the construction jobs that go with them. Nor will it go to Ohio, where Gov. John Kasich preferred rejectionism to the improvement of rail service among the state's largest cities, which could have produced 16,000 jobs.

Instead, it will go to 15 states that have more farsighted leadership, who understand the important role federal dollars can play in stimulating the economy, moving people quickly from place to place and reducing tailpipe emissions. Some of those states are led by Republicans: Gov. Rick Snyder of Michigan [happily stood beside](#) Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Monday to accept nearly \$200 million to upgrade the rail line between Dearborn and Kalamazoo, the bulk of the Chicago-Detroit corridor.

The difference between states that want better infrastructure and those that do not is likely to grow in coming years. Some states will accept federal aid and tax themselves to pay for better trains, upgraded roads and bridges, and effective water systems. Others will not.

In the Northeast, several Amtrak corridors will be upgraded, including a sliver of the Acela line and the Empire line through upstate New York. The Chicago-St. Louis corridor will be improved, and \$300 million will be invested in the high-speed project between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Texas is accepting \$15 million to start work on a fast line between Dallas and Houston.

Transportation is not all that is at stake. Last year, Utah Republican lawmakers tried to refuse \$101 million in federal money intended to save teachers' jobs; they backed down when it was clear that Washington could send the money directly to school districts. Oklahoma and other states have rejected federal dollars connected to health care reform. Earlier this year, Missouri nearly rejected extended jobless benefits for 10,000 residents after a handful of Republicans said the money was wasteful.

Refusenik Republicans glorify shopworn principles like smaller government and states' rights. They will have to defend them to their voters when the public hears the passenger trains whistling from the next state over.