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JOB

Trump's amazing infrastructure 'bait-and-switch'

"Trillion" was just a marketing slogan. Now Trump wants to sell Bonneville Power assets

It's the incredible shrinking infrastructure plan.

Candidate Donald Trump campaigned for over a year on a plan to spend \$1 trillion on America's neglected infrastructure. But Trump never sent Congress an infrastructure proposal in his first year in office. Then during his Jan. 30, 2018, State of the Union address, he increased the promised sum to \$1.5 trillion. Two weeks later, the public finally got a look at his proposal. It's ... brace for it ... at most \$200 billion in federal money.

"It is time to give Americans the working, modern infrastructure they deserve," Trump tells Congress in the 55-page legislative outline released Feb. 12.

What happened to the rest of the \$1 trillion, or the \$1.5 trillion? The Trump plan says it's supposed to come from *other people's money* — from state and local governments, which are constitutionally bound to balance their budgets and which



"As a bridge builder, I've been under the bridges and I've seen how bad they are," said Lori Baumann of Laborers Local 737, above. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), right, invited Baumann and IBEW Local 48 Business Manager Gary Young to speak at a Feb. 1 press conference outside the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. The event was meant to highlight the urgent need for federal spending to fix roads, bridges and infrastructure. "If you make a speech but don't back it up with hard dollars ... we know a scam when we see it," Wyden said, referring to Trump's State of the Union announcement of a forthcoming \$1.5 trillion infrastructure plan. "You can't make top notch infrastructure with bargain basement support."

are already struggling to pay for an increasing share of Medicaid costs.

But wait, there's more! Trump also proposes to sell off federal infrastructure to "state, local, or private entities" — including "transmission assets" belonging to federal agencies

like the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Never mind that the Northwest enjoys the lowest electricity rates in the nation thanks to the BPA. Says the Trump Administration: "The vast majority of the Nation's electricity needs are met through for-profit investor-

owned utilities." Why not sell off the remainder?

Other federal properties Trump wants to put up for sale include Ronald Reagan and Dulles International Airports, and the Washington Aqueduct, which supplies Washington, D.C. with fresh drinking water.

Meanwhile, most of the money Trump actually proposes to spend comes with strings attached. Half of the new federal money, \$100 billion, would be parceled out as incentives to local government entities that agree to match the funds four to one. Another \$50 billion is earmarked for rural block grants for transportation, broadband, water, waste and power, most of which will be given to states according to a formula based on the miles of rural roads and the rural population they have.

In response to the president's proposal, Democrats in Congress are pushing their own not-very-detailed "Better Deal" proposal, which would commit \$1 trillion in federal money — the amount Trump seemed to promise voters two years ago.

— Don McIntosh

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