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## EDITORIALS

Pritzker shouldn't squander \$205M  
on the Peotone airport folly

Gov. J.B. Pritzker's five-year, \$23.5 billion plan to rebuild Illinois' roads and bridges includes \$205.5 million for a highway infrastructure project that has no reason to be. Pritzker has earmarked the money as a step toward enabling the pipe dream otherwise known as the South Suburban Airport near Peotone. Put another way: The costly road project would serve a potential airport that no one needs and on which no one — except Pritzker and local officials — wants to squander even more money than taxpayers already have.

It's as if Illinois doesn't have an enormous list of infrastructure projects that even the governor's \$45 billion capital spending plan can't fund. This threatened waste of \$200 million-plus of scarce tax resources is as maddening as the project itself is unnecessary. As you read here in August: Governors have come and gone, thousands of acres bought by the state for the site have yet to see a square inch of tarmac paved ... and still public officials keep committing Other People's Money to the notion.

Why would Pritzker add his support — and another heap of Other People's Money — to a project on which potential patrons of a pretend airport keep voting no?

This time the taxpayer money would go toward land acquisition, engineering and construction of a new interchange at I-57 and Eagle Lake Road. There's nothing but farmland there now, but Pritzker has fallen in with a bevy of south suburban politicians who prophesy a vibrant, bustling third regional airport 44 miles south of Chicago.

**If there were any glint of demand for such an airport,** the expenditure might be justified. But that demand doesn't exist, and there's no sign that it ever will. The airlines have never been on board with the project, and instead have declared themselves all-in with O'Hare International Airport's massive \$8.5 billion expansion and renovations at Midway Airport.

Not to worry, Peotone propo-



FIELD OF DAFFY DREAMS

SCOTT STANTIS

nents say. The new airport will now be hawked as a cargo hub for the e-commerce industry. Build it, and online giant Amazon will come. So far, however, Amazon and other online merchants haven't warmed to the Peotone pitch.

Why? Several reasons. First, most cargo gets shipped by rail or truck because it's cheaper that way. Items shipped by air tend to involve more expensive goods, like pharmaceuticals and electronics, or perishable products such as seafood.

Second, the Chicago area already has abundant air cargo

capacity. Chicago Rockford International Airport saw cargo landings rise 55 percent in 2018, and airport officials expect that number to keep rising thanks to partnerships with Amazon and UPS. Gary Chicago International Airport also serves cargo flights, and like Rockford has the capacity to handle more of them. At O'Hare, expansion plans include 915,000 square feet of cargo space.

Illinois' transportation needs are massive. It's not hard to drive through the state and find crumbling roads and bridges. A better use of taxpayer money is to fix

existing infrastructure, rather than spending it on an idea that's been going nowhere for more than a quarter of a century.

There was a time years ago, when the region was strapped for air capacity, that we backed the plan for a third airport at Peotone — if it were built on the shoulders of private investment, and if the airlines committed to operating there.

Neither of those preconditions has come to be. As long as that remains the case, the Peotone flight of fancy should remain grounded. And so should any

needless spending on an interchange built for an airport without a reason to exist.

Gov. Pritzker, we wrote five long years ago that if private sector investors didn't step forward to build a Peotone airport, Illinois should sell the land and move on. So here's your three-step agenda:

Don't waste another dime on infrastructure for a pretend airport.

Sell the land — another plus for Illinois taxpayers.

Move on to projects that would actually benefit commerce and citizens.

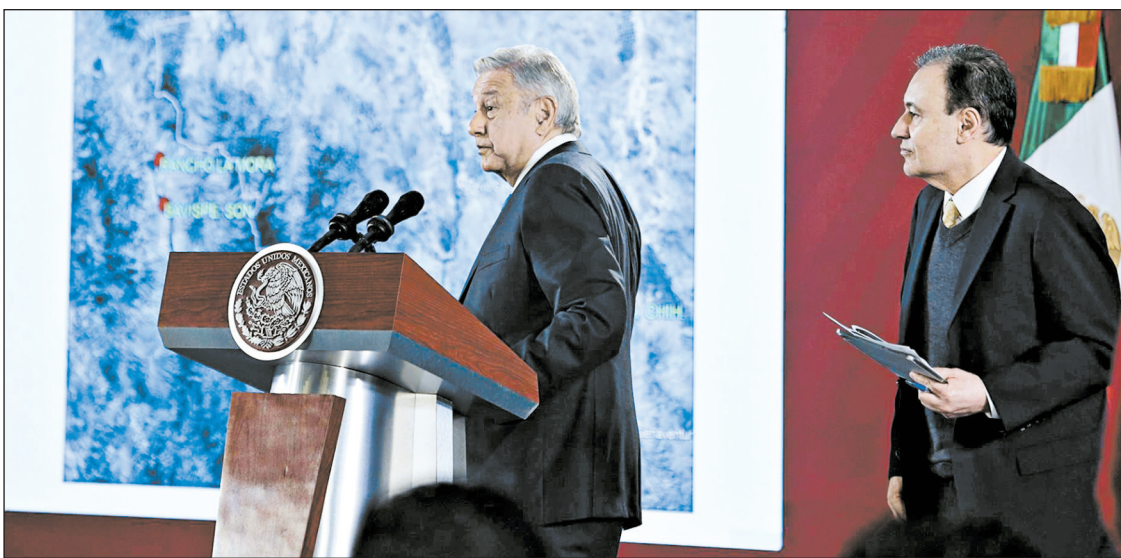
Mexico's 'hugs not bullets' approach to drug cartels  
has failed. The massacre of Americans is proof.

"Abrazos, no balazos." Hugs, not bullets. That has been a cornerstone of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's policy toward the country's murderous drug cartels. Eradicate poverty, and eradication of the cartels follows, he has insisted. It's hard to imagine Obrador hewing to his nonconfrontational tack with the cartels after what happened Monday in northern Mexico.

Nine members of a Mormon family with dual U.S.-Mexican citizenship were killed during a brutal ambush on their three sport utility vehicles. Six of the dead were children. Members of the LeBaron family say one child was gunned down while trying to flee. The attackers set one of the SUVs ablaze. Inside were twins less than a year old.

At this writing, motive remains murky. Authorities say they're still trying to figure out whether the LeBaron family, which had lived in the scrublands of Mexico's border region for decades, had been specifically targeted or whether the SUVs were mistaken as belonging to a rival gang. In the past, the family has spoken out about criminal gangs that operate in the border states of Chihuahua and Sonora, The New York Times reported. Ten years ago, two LeBaron family members were abducted and killed after confronting local drug gangs.

In extending an offer to help Mexico, President Donald Trump rashly tweeted that the U.S. could join with Mexico to "wage WAR on the drug cartels and wipe them off the face of the earth."



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, left, with Secretary of Public Security Alfonso Durazo, speaks in Mexico City Tuesday. An attack on a Mormon family in Mexico left nine dead, six of them children.

America doesn't need this entanglement. Obrador quickly rejected the offer: "The worst thing you can have is war."

But Obrador's approach isn't working either. Last December, the longtime leftist rose to power on a slew of populist pledges, including a "Mexico first" approach toward governance, an end to corruption — and an end to his country's drug wars. The fulcrum of his anti-cartel policy was a raft of social programs that would alleviate poverty and, in theory, eliminate root causes of cartel mayhem. "Evil needs to be fought with good by addressing the roots that generate violence," he said after his election.

**Since that show of naivete, the cartels have displayed the**

**blood-lust evil** he's up against. In October, hundreds of cartel gunmen besieged the city of Culiacan after Mexican security forces arrested the son of convicted cartel drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman Loera. The siege forced Obrador to release the son. Just days earlier, cartel gunmen ambushed police in the state of Michoacan, killing 14 officers.

And now, the massacre in northern Mexico. Obrador shouldn't need any more cartel ambushes to realize that time has run out on his hugs-not-bullets strategy. The Mexican leader should make this a turning point — for the sake of drug war-weary Mexicans and for the sake of Mexico's neighbor to the north.

**Chicagoans are all too aware** of the long reach of the cartels. El Chapo's Sinaloa cartel used Chicago as a main hub for cocaine and heroin shipments throughout the U.S. and Canada. Some shipments stayed here, though, making Chicago's gang and drug scourges that much worse.

Reacting to the massacre, U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse, a Republican from Nebraska, warned Mexico is "dangerously close to being a failed state." That should worry not just Obrador and the rest of Mexico, but Americans as well. It's time for Obrador to overhaul his strategy against the cartels, for the sake of citizens on both sides of the border.

Mexico's president may not want war. But that's what the vicious cartels have handed him.

WHAT OTHERS  
ARE SAYING

Many Americans don't care about impeachment because they take it as a given that this is the kind of corruption that politicians of all stripes have been doing all along. Many don't care because it looks like the same partisan warfare that's been going on forever, just with a different name. ...

I get that Democrats feel they have to proceed with impeachment to protect the Constitution and the rule of law. But there is little chance they will come close to ousting the president. So I hope they set a Thanksgiving deadline. Play the impeachment card through November, have the House vote and then move on to other things. The Senate can quickly dispose of the matter and Democratic candidates can make their best pitches for denying Trump re-election.

Elizabeth Bruenig of The Washington Post put her finger on something important in a recent essay on Trump's evangelical voters: the assumption of decline. Many Trump voters take it as a matter of course that for the rest of their lives things are going to get worse for them — economically, spiritually, politically and culturally. They are not the only voters who think this way. Many young voters in their "OK Boomer" T-shirts feel exactly the same, except their concerns are climate change, employment prospects and debt.

This sense of elite negligence in the face of national decline is the core issue right now. Impeachment is a distraction from that. As quickly as possible, it's time to move on.

**David Brooks,**  
The New York Times