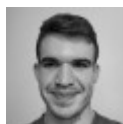


Critics Warn Biden Infrastructure Plan 'Falls Woefully Short' on Climate Crisis

commondreams.org/news/2021/03/31/critics-warn-biden-infrastructure-plan-falls-woefully-short-climate-crisis



"Biden has pledged to cut carbon emissions 50% and decarbonize our electricity sector, but this proposal won't even come close."



JAKE JOHNSON, STAFF WRITER

March 31, 2021

President Joe Biden's rollout of a \$2.26 trillion infrastructure and climate spending [blueprint](#) on Wednesday was met with an icy response from progressive advocacy groups and environmentalists, who argued the proposal in its current form is inadequate to the task of combating the climate crisis by overhauling the nation's polluting energy and transportation systems.

"Biden's industry-friendly infrastructure plan squanders one of our last, best chances to stop the climate emergency," warned Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Instead of a Marshall Plan approach that moves our economy to

renewable energy, it includes gimmicky subsidies for carbon capture, fantastically wishes the free market will save us, and fails to take crucial and ambitious steps toward phasing out fossil fuels."

"The investments in our electric power system are too small to transition to 100% clean renewable energy, will continue to waste money on dirty nuclear energy, and will send subsidies to fossil fuel corporations by devoting funding to carbon capture schemes."
—Wenonah Hauter, Food & Water Watch "Biden has pledged to cut carbon emissions 50% and decarbonize our electricity sector," Hartl added, "but this proposal won't even come close."

The American Jobs Plan represents the first half of a two-pronged recovery proposal that the Biden administration is planning to detail in the coming days, with the healthcare-focused second part expected some time next month.

Late Wednesday afternoon, Biden is set to deliver a speech in Pittsburgh outlining the infrastructure and climate portion of the package, which calls for just over \$2 trillion in total spending over the next eight years on revamping the nation's roads, bridges, highways, water systems, and electric grid as well as investments in broadband and home care.

Summarized in a [fact-sheet](#) released by the White House on Wednesday, the president's proposal includes \$85 billion to modernize U.S. transit systems, \$174 billion in "grant and incentive programs" aimed at promoting electric vehicle development, \$213 billion to retrofit homes and commercial buildings, \$100 billion to upgrade and construct new public schools, and \$180 billion on research programs "establish the United States as a leader in climate science, innovation, and R&D."

Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch, said that while Biden's proposal is "more ambitious than previous efforts, the American Jobs Plan still falls woefully short of truly addressing the multiple crises facing our country and our planet."

"The investments in our electric power system are too small to transition to 100% clean renewable energy, will continue to waste money on dirty nuclear energy, and will send subsidies to fossil fuel corporations by devoting funding to carbon capture schemes," Hauter argued. "The funding levels outlined in the White House plan are simply inadequate to meet the essential task of replacing our nation's crumbling water infrastructure while assuring clean, safe, and affordable water for all."

The American Jobs Plan—which the president wants to finance by ending fossil fuel subsidies and raising taxes on the wealthy and large corporations—is Biden's opening bid to members of Congress, who have already begun aggressively jockeying over the framework's specifics.

While centrist Democrats are balking at the plan's price-tag and proposed tax increases, progressive lawmakers are warning that the White House's framework doesn't offer anywhere close to sufficient spending to tackle the present crises of climate change, mass unemployment, and crumbling infrastructure.

"The priorities that the president is laying out today begin the process of building back from this crisis, but don't go nearly far enough."

—Matt Hayward, Congressional Progressive Caucus Center

"This is not nearly enough," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said of Biden's proposal late Tuesday.

In marked contrast to Biden's call for just over \$2 trillion in spending over the next eight years, Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and other progressives are pushing for \$10 trillion in spending over the next decade on infrastructure, renewable energy development, clean public transit, and more.

"With up to \$1 trillion per year over the next decade, we can make critical and productive investments in clean energy, job creation, and our nation's infrastructure," Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) tweeted Wednesday.

As the Biden White House unveiled the details of its infrastructure spending plan on Wednesday, a coalition of more than 50 think tanks and advocacy organizations urged the president and congressional Democrats to embrace progressives' demand for \$10

trillion in spending over the next decade, a goal the groups called "economically sound and procedurally achievable" as well as "overwhelmingly popular."

The ambitious proposal's enactment, the coalition said, "is simply a matter of political will."

Matt Hayward, legislative affairs director at the Congressional Progressive Caucus Center, said in a [statement](#) Wednesday that "the compounding crises our country faces—extreme poverty, emboldened white supremacy, and the climate crisis—demonstrate the need for President Biden and Congress to go bold and go fast."

"The priorities that the president is laying out today begin the process of building back from this crisis, but don't go nearly far enough," Hayward argued. "Our families and communities need and deserve so much more, and they need it now."

In a [blog post](#) on Wednesday, Josh Bivens of the Economic Policy Institute sketched out a rough estimate of the spending that would likely be necessary over the next decade to meet the nation's most pressing needs in the areas of infrastructure, green energy investment, higher education, and healthcare.

Considering the costs of proposals that are under discussion for the new package as well as policy ideas not currently on the table—such as [expanding Medicare to children](#)—Bivens puts the ideal level of spending at just under \$10.5 trillion over the next 10 years.

"The case for undertaking another round of ambitious public investments," Bivens wrote, "rests simply on the fact that they will help provide a better and fairer society."

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