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The 'Highway Boondoggles' That the Pandemic Hasn't Killed.

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group singles out seven highway projects deemed especially wasteful in a coronavirus-challenged year.

Fun fact: A century ago, the word “boondoggle” referred to the boxy lanyards that kids weave at summer camp. It gained its other meaning in the mid-1930s, after U.S. news reports revealed that a federal New Deal program was paying jobless workers to learn and teach the craft to disadvantaged youth. President Roosevelt’s critics latched on, and while his administration defended and continued its policies, the term became synonymous with useless government spending.

Nearly 100 years later, arguments over what constitutes wasteful expenditures take on a more existential tenor as the U.S. faces a public health crisis and runaway global warming. Released this month, the [U.S. Public Interest Research Group’s sixth annual report on highway boondoggles](#) is an example: It calls out “seven budget-eating highway projects slated to cost a total of \$26 billion that will harm communities and the environment, while likely failing to achieve meaningful transportation goals.”

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