

# [***Buttigieg Grilled In East Palestine: Criticizes Trump As Derailment Sparks Partisan Feud***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:67MH-B661-DXVP-53TT-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Sara Dorn, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Buttigieg said Trump should support the Biden Administration in implementing tighter restrictions on the rail industry.

**Body**

**Topline**

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg acknowledged Thursday he could have spoken out about the toxic train derailment in eastern Ohio sooner, but urged former President Donald Trump who visited the town this week to support tightening rail industry regulations that were nixed during his tenure, as the rail disaster ignites a partisan feud.

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Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg speaks during a news conference Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023, near the site of the Feb. 3 Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. (AP Photo/Matt Freed)

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</figcaption></figure>

**Key Facts**

Buttigieg toured the site in East Palestine, Ohio, where 38 Norfolk Southern train cars derailed on February 3, several of which carried toxic chemicals like vinyl chloride, igniting a blaze that shrouded the town in smoke and prompted a mandatory evacuation.

In a press conference during the visit, Buttigieg acknowledged he could have expressed his concerns about the derailment sooner when asked why he waited a week and a half to sendhis first tweetabout the incident.

When asked by reporters why he waited three weeks to visit the site, Buttigieg suggested he was following the norm.

Trump claimed while visiting East Palestine that he had nothing to do with rollbacks to proposed rail safety protocols made during his tenure, leading Buttigieg to say Thursday that Trump should express support for reversing the deregulations . . . if he had nothing to do with it.

**Crucial Quote**

I m here for the work, and not for the ***politics***. You can sense when you talk to local leaders and local residents that they re getting sick of the ***politics*** too and this national ideological layer that s been added into this, Buttigieg said when asked about the political backlash.

**Key Background**

The Environmental Protection Agency is leading a cleanup of the derailment site that Norfolk Southern is required to pay for. No deaths have been recorded, and authorities say the air and water are safe, though some residents have reported adverse health effects and expressed concerns about the long-term effects on the environment. Buttigieg visited the site of the derailment amid criticism from Republicans who have cast his delayed visit as an example of what they call Democrats neglect of rural, working-class areas. Many on the right sought to juxtapose President Joe Biden s visit to Ukraine and Poland earlier this month with the absence of a high-profile federal official in East Palestine. Buttigieg announced on Wednesday, the same day Trump visited the Ohio town, that he would visit the following day.

**Contra**

The Biden Administration has responded to the GOP criticism by highlighting Trump s efforts to curtail rail industry regulations and downsize the Environmental Protection Agency. The White House demanded the Trump Administration and Republicans in Congress apologize to the residents of East Palestine on Wednesday in a statement by spokesperson Andrew Bates that accused them of selling [East Palestine] out to rail industry lobbyists. The statement referenced an Obama-era proposal that would have required more advanced brakes on certain trains carrying hazardous materials, an idea that was withdrawn by the Trump Administration in 2018. Bates also highlighted Republican lawmakers efforts to block Biden s plan to designate more wetlands and waterways as federally protected land, which would require businesses to obtain permits for activities that could harm water quality.

**Tangent**

The National Transportation Safety Board on Thursday released a preliminary report that found crew members were urged to slow down the train when a wheel bearing overheated. Investigators have yet to determine the cause of the crash, however, and whether the malfunctioning part played a role.

**Further Reading**

Ohio Train Derailment: Crew Received Alert About Overheated Wheel Bearing And Applied Emergency Break, Officials Say(Forbes)

EPA Orders Norfolk Southern To Pay For Cleanup After Disastrous Ohio Train Derailment (**Forbes**)

EPA Administrator Michael Regan, Governors Visit East Palestine For Train Derailment Update(**Forbes**)

White House Demands GOP, Ex-Trump Officials Apologize To East Palestine For Toxic Rail Spill (Forbes)

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