Contrails Frontline

Double-bind – either HSR takes too few passengers off Airlines to solve warming or it links to the Airline Trade-off DA by taking enough passengers off airlines to solve warming but too many for airlines to cope with, collapsing the airline industry

Air Stuff to cut

HSR can’t eclipse aviation for 30 years

Levinson (Fellow at the Institute of Transportation Studies) 2010 (David, “Economic Development Impacts of High-Speed Rail,” 2010, <http://nexus.umn.edu/Papers/EconomicDevelopmentImpactsOfHSR.pdf>) //CL

That said, remember that real HSR (not the short term improvements to get to 90 or 110 MPH, which may or may not be a good thing, but are certainly not HSR) is a long term deployment, so it needs to be compared with cars 10 or 20 or 30 years hence, and the air transportation system over the same period. Cars are getting better from both an environmental perspective and from the perspective of automation technologies. The DARPA Urban Challenge vehicles need to be bested to justify HSR. Cars driven by computers, which while sounding far off is technologically quite near, should be able to attain relatively high speeds (though certainly not HSR speeds in mixed traffic). Further they may move less material per passenger than HSR (trains are heavy), and so may net less environmental impact if electrically powered. Aviation is improving as well, both in terms of its environmental impacts and its efﬁciency. Socially-constructed problems like aviation security or congestion can be solved for far less money than is required for any one high-speed rail line.

HSR claims to reduce greenhouse gases are based on highly optimistic assumptions for rail and pessimistic assumptions for autos and airlines

O’Toole (Director of the Independence Institute's Center for the American Dream, American public policy analyst, Senior fellow with the Cato Institute) 2009 (Randal, “The High Cost of High-Speed Rail,” American Dream Coalition @ Center for Economic Freedom Texas Public Policy Foundation, August 2009, <http://americandreamcoalition.org/transit/HSRinTX.pdf> ) //CL

Such analyses are rarely objective, however. The California High-Speed Rail Authority claims that high-speed rail would save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.75 But these claims are based on highly optimistic assumptions for rail and pessimistic assumptions for autos and airlines: The Los Angeles-to-San Francisco line would • carry more than more than three times as many passengers in 2025 as Amtrak now carries in the Boston-to-Washington corridor, even though that corridor serves more people than the California corridor is expected to have in 2025;76 Neither automobiles nor airplanes will become • more energy efficient or cleaner than they are today;77 The authority never mentions the energy and • pollution cost of replacing trains and reconstructing track and electrical facilities every 30 years; The authority calculates the energy cost of building high-speed rail, but not the greenhouse gas emissions. These assumptions are all examples of what Danish planning professor Bent Flyvbjerg calls “optimism bias.”78 Such bias, says Flyvbjerg, typically afflicts proponents of megaprojects, which is why large public works projects almost inevitably cost more and produce smaller benefits than originally promised. Based on these optimistic assumptions, the authority estimates that operational energy savings will repay the energy cost of building high-speed rail in 13 years, after which the rail line will save 11.75 trillion British thermal units (BTUs) per year.79 The rail line is also projected to save 7.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year, or about 1.4 percent of the state’s projected output in 2025.80 Even with these optimistic assumptions, high-speed rail reduces corridor transportation energy consumption by only 8.3 percent. This means the operational energy and greenhouse gas savings fall to zero if we assume instead that automobiles and airplanes are, by 2025, just 8.3 percent more energy efficient than they are today. If automakers meet Obama’s fuel-efficiency standards, autos will be more than 30 percent more efficient in 2025 than they are today, so high-speed rail will actually be wasting energy.

Growing efficiencies in aircraft solve for energy

O’Toole (Director of the Independence Institute's Center for the American Dream, American public policy analyst, Senior fellow with the Cato Institute) 2009 (Randal, “The High Cost of High-Speed Rail,” American Dream Coalition @ Center for Economic Freedom Texas Public Policy Foundation, August 2009, <http://americandreamcoalition.org/transit/HSRinTX.pdf> ) //CL

As a Department of Energy report concluded in 2000, “intercity auto trips tend to be relatively efficient highway trips with higher than-average vehicle occupancy rates—on average, they are as energy-efficient as rail intercity trips.” Moreover, the report added, “if passenger rail competes for modal share by moving to high-speed service, its energy efficiency should be reduced somewhat—making overall energy savings even more problematic.” This explains why the Florida High Speed Rail Authority’s analysis of a Tampa-Orlando rail line concluded that “the environmentally preferred alternative is the No-Build Alternative” because it “would result in less direct and in direct impact to the environment.” An objective analysis of other high-speed rail proposals would reach the same conclusion. Not all analyses agree with this assessment. The FRA’s high-speed rail plan claims that its trains would reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by 6 billion pounds (2.7 million metric tons) per year. This was based on an analysis by the Center for Clean Air Policy that assumed that: Auto fuel prices would remain low, leading cars in 2025 to be only a little more energy-efficient than today. Considering recent spikes in fuel prices and Obama’s new fuel-economy standards, the average car on the road in 2025 is likely to be considerably more fuel-efficient than today. The average automobile on the road carries 1.6 people. As previously noted, occupancies for intercity travel are closer to 2.4. Airline energy efficiencies would grow by 0.6 percent per year. In fact, airline energy efficiencies have grown by 3.2 percent per year since 1970. Considering new technologies now in development, there is every reason to believe that aircraft energy efficiencies will grow much faster than 0.6 percent per year. The average high-speed train in every corridor would operate at 70 percent of passenger capacity. Yet, in 2008,the average Amtrak train operated at only 51 percent of capacity; Amtrak’s moderate-speed trains in the Boston-Washington, Los Angeles–San Diego, and Philadelphia Harrisburg corridors all operated at 34 to 48 percent of capacity. These are examples of what Danish planning professor Bent Flyvbjerg calls “optimism bias.” Such bias, says Flyvbjerg, explains why large public works projects almost inevitably cost more and produce smaller benefits than originally promised. In addition, nearly 1 billion pounds of the projected annual reduction of CO2 were from the Boston-to-Washington Corridor, which is not part of the FRA plan.

Airline Trade-off?

HSR takes 80-90% of the air/rail market

GAO (the audit, evaluation, and investigation arm of the United States Congress) 2009

(Government Accountability Office, “High Speed Passenger Rail: Future Development Will Depend on Addressing Financial and Other Challenges and Establishing a Clear Federal Role,” Report to Congressional Requesters, March 2009, p. 16-17, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09317.pdf?source=ra>) //CL

In France, Japan, Spain, and elsewhere, high speed rail has been shown to be time-competitive with air travel and has relieved capacity constraints at airports. For example, high speed rail in Japan has resulted in eliminating one air route (Tokyo-Nagoya), while several others have lost significant market share to high speed rail. With the introduction of the Madrid- Barcelona high speed rail line in February 2008, air travel between the cities has dropped an estimated 30 percent (from 5.0 million to 3.5 million air passengers), while high speed rail riders increased markedly. In France, high speed rail has captured 90 percent of the Paris-Lyon air market, and Air France officials estimated that for high speed rail trips of between 2 and 3 hours, high speed rail is likely to capture about 80 percent of the air-rail market over time. By displacing shorter distance air travel, high speed rail has freed up considerable airport capacity in those cities for other longer distance flights. However, because high speed rail becomes a new competitor with short-distance air travel, airlines have in some cases actively opposed its development. In the United States, most of the 16 high speed rail projects we focused on will connect metropolitan areas with anticipated capacity constraints at nearby airports (see fig. 4).

HSR kills airlines

Bolts and Louie (Directors for Public Outreach for the US High Speed Rail Association, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C.) 5/21/12

(Nancy Bolts and Emy Louie, Fast Trains: America’s High Speed Future, p. 749) //CL

For example, instead of traveling a long distance in their automobile, the Silvettis will ride a regional rail service or drive to a major high-speed rail hub in New York City, and within 2.5 hours, they will arrive “as planned,” relaxed, in Washington D.C. ready to tour the Smithsonian Museums. In California, Pamela Stevens will drive her passengers to a rail stop in San Jose on the San Francisco to San Diego high-speed rail route. When the group disembarks in Anaheim, a short bus, shuttle, or taxi ride will bring them to their final destination, energized and rested, with enough energy to begin enjoying their visit as soon as they arrive. Driving is not the only form of transportation that would decrease as a result of offering people the option of hopping on a train rather than putting a foot to the gas pedal. The need for short and intermediate-length airplane flights will decrease significantly. Some examples: one year after the high-speed rail line opened from Tokyo to Osaka, the number of airplane passengers declined by more than 50%. After the Thalys high-speed rail line opened from Paris to Brussels, Air France eventually canceled all airline flights between the two. The Thalys now holds 52% of the market share of French-Netherlands travel options. Two years after the high-speed rail line opened from Madrid to Barcelona in 2008, domestic air traffic between the two cities decreased by 40%. In as few as 48 days after the high-speed rail line opened from Xi’an to Zhengzhou in 2010, all airline flights linking the two cities were cancelled. Based on such observations worldwide, transportation experts such as Richard Gilbert and Anthony Perl predict that if high-speed rail becomes an option in North America, commuter air travel will substantially decrease here as well. Those airplane flights that remain will utilize jumbo jets carrying hundreds of passengers each, mainly flying between the East and West Coasts or to international locations. Also, it's predicted that commercial airports will decrease from around 400 to 50 by 2025.

Energy Turn???

HSR will be less energy-efficient and pollute more than autos

O’Toole (Director of the Independence Institute's Center for the American Dream, American public policy analyst, Senior fellow with the Cato Institute) 2009

(Randal, “High-speed rail is expensive and inefficient,” 7/30/09, <http://www.illinoispolicy.org/news/article.asp?ArticleSource=1256>) //CL

Nor is high-speed rail good for the environment. The Department of Energy says that, in intercity travel, automobiles are as energy-efficient as Amtrak, and that boosting Amtrak trains to higher speeds will make them less energy-efficient and more polluting than driving. Steven Polzin of the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research points out that autos and buses have relatively short life cycles, so they can readily adapt to the need to save energy or reduce pollution. Rail systems "may be far more difficult or expensive to upgrade to newer, more efficient technologies," Polzin adds. If automakers meet Obama's fuel-efficiency standards, autos will be more than 30 percent more efficient in 2025 than they are today, so high-speed rail actually will be wasting energy. People who want to save energy should encourage the state to relieve the traffic congestion that wastes nearly 3 billion gallons of fuel each year. Traffic signal coordination and other low-cost techniques can do more to relieve congestion and save energy than high-speed rail, and at a far lower cost. An expensive rail system used by a small portion of Illinoisans is not change we can believe in. Illinois should use its share of rail stimulus funds for safety improvements such as grade crossings, not for new trains that will obligate taxpayers to pay billions of dollars in additional subsidies.

Not efficient enough to solve warming

O’Toole (Director of the Independence Institute's Center for the American Dream, American public policy analyst, Senior fellow with the Cato Institute) 2009 (Randal, “The High Cost of High-Speed Rail,” American Dream Coalition @ Center for Economic Freedom Texas Public Policy Foundation, August 2009, <http://americandreamcoalition.org/transit/HSRinTX.pdf> ) //CL

It is unlikely that moderate-speed train operations will save any energy at all. Such trains will mostly be Diesel-powered, and increasing speeds from 79 to 110 mph will significantly increase the energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions of those trains. Saving energy requires that trains accelerate slowly and coast into stations rather than brake heavily, but such practices reduce the time savings offered by higher top speeds. True high-speed trains save energy by using lighter equipment, but the energy cost of higher speeds party offsets the savings from hauling less weight. Any remaining operational savings are not likely to be sufficient to recover the huge amounts of energy consumed and greenhouse gases released during construction of new rail lines. After studying high-speed rail proposals in Britain, Professor Roger Kemp of Lancaster University concluded that the construction costs dwarf any savings in operations unless the rail lines are used to their full capacity. With a round-the-clock average of just one train an hour in each direction, and no more than two trains a hour during the busiest times of day, even Amtrak’s New York-to-Washington corridor is far from full capacity. Electrically powered high-speed trains produce less greenhouse gases only if that electricity is generated from renewable power sources. Most electricity in the U.S. comes from fossil fuels, with the result that urban rail transit systems in such cities as Baltimore, Denver, Cleveland, Miami, and Washington generate as much or more greenhouse gases, per passenger mile, as driving an SUV, much less an ordinary car. It is far more cost-effective to save energy by encouraging people to drive more fuel-efficient cars than to build and operate high-speed rail. Moreover, in places that do generate electricity from renewable sources, it would be more cost-effective to use that electricity to power electric or plug-in hybrid cars than high-speed rail.

Congestion

HSR exacerbates traffic congestion – more cars

Button (Professor – George Mason University School of Public Policy) 3/16

(Kenneth Button, “Is there any economic justification for high-speed railways in the United States?” 16 March 2012, Journal of Transport Geography, Volume 22, May 2012, Pages 300–302) //CL

Much of the justification for HSR has involved looking at the mode from a wider social welfare function perspective with arguments revolving around non-market attributes, often involving second-best arguments concerning modal transfer from more congesting and environmentally intrusive modes (de Rus and Nombela, 2007). In terms of reducing road congestion, however, over most road systems that compete with planned HSR much travel is short distance and not between the origin and destination of the HSR service; speed requires non-stop services. HSR can add to local congestion at either end of a service because most people do not travel between city centers but make at least one specific urban trip to reach a HSR station. Put another way, most congestion in transportation systems is in the “last mile” – essentially on links on networks near the origins and destinations of trips, and focusing travel on major rail stations hardly mitigates this. In addition, there is little evidence of a high cross elasticity of demand between road and rail transportation, or between air travel and rail except in a few very particular, short haul cases (Oum et al., 2008). One reason for this is a lack of any major economies of scope in high-speedrail. It largely offers connected services, rather than networks of interconnected services with substantial amounts of on-line traffic. Its markets are thus, generally, quite limited.

States Links

States can create HSR through multistate agreements or other instruments

U.S Department of Transportation April 2009 (http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/rrdev/hsrstrategicplan.pdf )(International data from: GAO report, High-Speed Passenger Rail (GAO-09-317); UIC High-Speed Department, “High-Speed Lines in the World” www.uic.asso.fr/uic/spip.php?article573; and Jane’s World Railways 2007-2008. International ridership data is from 2007, except for Germany and U.K., which are from 2005. Amtrak data from FY 2008; represents both NEC Regional (predecessor service began in 1969) and Acela services. “Train à grande vitesse” or “high-speed train.”

Multi-State Partnerships. Most intercity passenger rail corridors, including designated high-speed rail corridors, cross State boundaries. Viable HSR corridor strategies will, therefore, require a multi-State partnership in many cases. To successfully plan, fund, build and operate these corridors, the States involved will need to act in a coordinated fashion, through an interstate compact, a multi-State agreement, or other instrument. Any such multi-State understanding will require the backing of several political and administrative entities within each State.

Federal Swift Act gives states the primary power to develop and operate HSR

Prok (Legal analyst at Lexis Nexis, Chief Executive and General Counsel at FRONT RANGE ENERGY EFFICIENCY LLC) 2009

(Joshua, “High Speed Rail: Planning and Financing the next Fifty Years of American Mobility” 36 Transp. L. J.48) //CL

The Swift Rail Development Act of 1994 (Swift Act) might well be considered the heart of federal regulation of high speed rail. In the Swift Act, Congress declared high speed rail to be an environmentally advantageous alternative to other intercity transportation, and acknowledged that federal funding would be necessary to develop the technology necessary to make high speed rail a reality in the U.S.2 The purpose of the Act was "to encourage farsighted State, local, and private efforts in the analysis and planning for high-speed rail systems in appropriate intercity corridors." The Swift Act put the onus on "State and local governments" to develop the technology with federal planning support when necessary, and states that "new high-speed rail service should not receive Federal subsidies for operating and maintenance expenses.” The Secretary of Transportation delegated authority under the Swift Act as it related to high speed rail to the Federal Railroad Administrator. Congress, therefore, directed the States to develop and operate high speed rail services with preliminary guidance from the Federal Railroad Administration(FRA). Accordingly, codified portions of the Swift Act provide "high-speed rail assistance" for continued corridor development through "eligible activities," including: environmental study, economic analysis, financial planning, and acquisitions. The assistance provides "matching funds not to exceed fifty percent of the costs of qualifying eligible activities. In terms of financing for fiscal years 2006-2013, the federal government makes $100,000,0009 available to State and local governments for corridor development and technological improvements. The FRA publishes an annual "Notice of funding availability; solicitation for applications" for State and local governments to apply for high speed rail assistance.

Obama Bad Link

HSR is popular with the public – 62% will use it

Butman (Staff writer at Milwaukee business news) 2012

(Jim, “Survey shows public support for high-speed rail,” 12/01/12, <http://www.biztimes.com/article/20101201/ENEWSLETTERS02/312019989/>) //CL

Nearly two-thirds of American adults (62 percent) said they would definitely or probably use high-speed rail service for leisure or business travel if it were an option, according to a survey from the Washington-based American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The survey, taken among 24,711 adults, also asked how important various factors would be in choosing high-speed rail service. Ninety-one percent of respondents said high-speed rail should offer shorter travel times compared to driving to their destinations; 91 percent said the rail service should be less expensive than flying; 89 percent said it should be less expensive than driving; and 85 percent said the rail service should integrate with local public transit so they could avoid using rental cars and cabs, and paying parking fees. The APTA wants Congress to invest $50 billion over the next six years to build a high-speed rail network. "In most political circles, garnering nearly two-thirds support for a forward-thinking vision like high-speed rail would be considered a landslide," said APTA president William Millar said. "We strongly support the government's commitment to implementing high-speed rail. It will provide more options for travelers, as well as create jobs and be a strong boost for the local economy." For more information on the survey, click here. Meanwhile, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is conducting public hearings to gather input about high-speed rail throughout the state this week. Wisconsin has been allocated $810 million in federal funding to build a high-speed rail line to connect Milwaukee to Madison. However, Governor-elect Scott Walker is vowing to kill the project.

Obama Good Link

Public opposes HSR – yes, even California

New York Times (Boston New York Times Co.) 6/3/12

(New York Times, “Poll: Voters turn against California bullet train,” 6/03/12, <http://articles.boston.com/2012-06-03/news/32009857_1_high-speed-rail-bullet-train-rail-project>) //CL

A new poll finds California voters are experiencing buyers’ remorse over a proposed $68 billion bullet train project, as the number of lawsuits against the rail system grows. Fifty-five percent of voters want to see the high-speed rail bond issue that was approved in 2008 back on the ballot, and 59 percent say they would now vote against it, according to the USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times survey (lat.ms/N9tTcm) published Saturday. Since the $9 billion borrowing plan was passed, the projected cost of the bullet train between Los Angeles and San Francisco has roughly doubled, and it will now share track with slower commuter and freight trains in some areas, the Times said. A majority of voters have turned against the ambitious undertaking just as Gov. Jerry Brown is pushing lawmakers to approve the start of construction in the Central Valley later this year.

Cuts have caused voters to oppose HSR – costs

AP (Huffington Post, Associated Press) 6/3/12

(The Associated Press, “California High Speed Rail Doesn't Have The Support Of Majority Of Californians: Poll,” 6/3/12, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/04/california-high-speed-rail_n_1566807.html>) //CL

The poll found that concerns about the project extend across regions, ethnic groups, income brackets and even political affiliations, according to the Times. Among Democrats, initially the strongest supporters of the plan, only 43 percent would support the bond in a new vote, while 47 percent would oppose it. Seventy-six percent of Republicans would vote against it. Voters have reconsidered their support for high-speed rail as lawmakers slash public programs to cope with a widening budget gap, said Dan Schnur, director of the poll and head of the Unruh Institute of Politics at USC. "The growing budget deficit is making Californians hesitant about spending so much money on a project like this one when they're seeing cuts to public education and law enforcement," Unruh said. "But they also seem to be wary as to whether state government can run a big speed rail system effectively." In Southern California, 67 percent of voters said they would reject issuing high-speed rail bonds if they could vote again.

Majority of California oppose HSR

Maccioli (Environmental Analyst, Examiner) 6/3/12

(Frank, “New USC/Los Angeles Times poll drops more bad news on HSR,” 6/3/12, <http://www.examiner.com/article/new-usc-los-angeles-times-poll-drops-more-bad-news-on-hsr>) //CL

California's beleaguered high-speed rail (HSR) project suffered another major blow today with the release of a new public opinion poll that shows a majority of Californians now oppose the project. Coming on the heels of new lawsuits filed by Central Valley opponents last week to stop the project, the new report provides more ammunition for those who are lobbying state legislators to put the brakes on HSR before more tax money is spent. The latest poll, a product of the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences/Los Angeles Times Poll project, was released to the public and discussed today at a press conference call. The poll covered a variety of issues - taxes, the upcoming elections, term limits, the state budget, same sex marriage, gambling, and HSR. "California voters have clearly reconsidered their support for high-speed rail," said Dan Schnur, director of the poll and the Unruh Institute of Politics at USC. "They want the chance to vote again — and they want to vote no. The growing budget deficit is making Californians hesitant about spending so much money on a project like this one when they're seeing cuts to public education and law enforcement. But they also seem to be wary as to whether state government can run a big speed rail system effectively."

Politics Links

No support for HSR – Republicans and Dems are too concerned with other problems – empirically proven

Johnson (Correspondent, National Journal) 1/17

(Fawn, “High-Speed Rail in a Coma,” National Journal, January 17, 2012, http://transportation.nationaljournal.com/2012/01/highspeed-rail-in-a-coma.php) //CL

Policymakers' appetite for high-speed rail seems to be dwindling to almost nothing. It is old news that congressional Republicans are not fans of President Obama's high-speed rail initiative. They view it as a waste of taxpayer dollars at a time when belt-tightening is of the highest order. The national conversation has not advanced much beyond that point, perhaps because the biggest fans of high-speed rail are distracted by other problems. Democrats in Congress raised only a faint protest when the fiscal 2012 appropriations bill cut funding for the Transportation Department's high-speed rail program. Republicans who ostensibly like high-speed rail said the cuts will allow rail enthusiasts to start over from scratch.

Congressional support for HSR low – GOP

Laing (Transportation Specialist) 6/4

(Keith, “The Hill, DOT official: Obama support of high-speed rail 'remains as strong as ever',” 6/4/12, <http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/railroads/230777-dot-official-obama-support-of-high-speed-rail-remains-as-strong-as-ever>) //CL

Support for high-speed rail in Congress has ebbed to a definitive low since Republicans came to power in the House in 2010. Money from the 2009 economic stimulus package for railways that was offered by the Obama administration was rejected by three prominent Republican governors, and GOP members in the House moved successfully last year to eliminate future funding for high-speed rail. Despite, Szabo said at the APTA conference Monday that "as we speak – 32 states are now moving ahead with 153 rail-development projects. "This year alone, 44 projects in 16 states – representing close to $3 billion in federal funding – are underway or set to break ground," he said. "And, other projects are already coming in on time and on budget." Early in the first half of Obama's tenure in office, he called for a nationwide network of high-speed railways that he said would rival the reach of the interstate highway system. The Obama administration included $8 billion for construction in the 2009 economic stimulus, and prominently awarded the money to states the day after his 2010 State of the Union address. Since then, a proposed high-speed railway in California that was awarded the most money by the Obama administration has come under fire for escalating costs, and opponents have argued that railways should only be built in the populous northeastern U.S.

Obama’s HSR floundering due to GOP spending crackdown – scale back of California project proves

Mitchell (Staff Writer, Wall Street Journal) 2011

(John, “Plan for High-Speed Rail Just Inching Along,” Wall Street Journal, October 17, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204774604576631600031699460.html>) //CL

The Obama administration's push for high-speed trains is floundering, as Congress moves to clamp down on funding and a showcase California project encounters new hurdles. California is set to update its plans for a San Francisco-to-Los Angeles high-speed line by Nov. 1. Officials say the state is looking at shortening the initial route and relying more heavily on existing lines. The project is the principal hope for the Obama administration to fulfill its promise of bringing to the U.S. true high-speed rail service—loosely defined as trains traveling 150 miles per hour or faster—after Florida canceled a planned Tampa-to-Orlando route in February. The California troubles reflect the difficulty of shifting a country that mainly relies on the automobile and airplane. The federal government and states have for decades built and maintained roads using a dedicated revenue stream, the federal gasoline tax of 18.4 cents per gallon. There is no such source of cash for high-speed rail, putting rail proponents at the mercy of political winds. A Democratic-controlled Congress approved $10.5 billion for high-speed rail, most of it in the 2009 stimulus package. But earlier this year, with Republicans controlling the House, Congress rescinded $400 million. The money has been allocated, but virtually no additional funding is likely in the current fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. Senate Democrats have proposed $100 million for high-speed rail, while House Republicans suggest zero.

HSR very partisan now

Burns (international journalist at policy innovations, nonprofit media venture) 2011

(Patrick, “All Aboard for High-Speed Rail,” Policy Innovations, February 1, 2011, <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000194>) //CL

America's current "high-speed" train, Amtrak's Acela Express, averages a mere 80 mph along its 16-station route from the District of Columbia to Boston. By comparison, France's TGV has an average speed of more than 150 mph, and China just built a train that can exceed 300 mph. An Acela trip from New York to Boston costs about $100 and clocks in around 3.5 hours—or just a tad quicker than the $15 buses that leave from Chinatown. As anyone who has traveled on Amtrak will tell you, the system is not known for punctuality, thus putting Amtrak in close competition with the independent bus lines. In an automobile-driven nation, some see the federal government's rail initiative as overly optimistic, questioning the demand. This has led Transportation Secretary Ray Lahood to defend high-speed rail with an "if you build it they will come" attitude. Across the country, high-speed rail has encountered vociferous opposition, and some don't even want to build it all. California received the lion's share of the federal rail earmarks ($2.25 billion), but even in that state critics have dubbed the proposed Central Valley line a "train to nowhere." Florida's new conservative governor, Rick Scott, has considered saying "no thanks" to $2.39 billion in federal funding for his state, while his newly elected Republican colleagues in Wisconsin and Ohio beat him to the punch—both asked Secretary Lahood to redirect $1.2 billion in grants. Like most everything these days, high-speed rail has become politicized. "On the one hand we have tremendous presidential leadership, and on the other we have emerging partisanship around what was historically a very bipartisan issue," said Kevin Brubaker, Deputy Director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center, a public interest advocacy organization.

Spending Links

HSR will cost $1 trillion just to build – and hundreds of millions thereafter – Taiwan proves

Brannon and Thoman 12 (Ike and Matt are Staff Writers for American.com. “About Those Better Roads in China” http://www.american.com/archive/2012/april/about-those-better-roads-in-china April 18 2012)

Perhaps most tellingly, the vaunted Chinese investment in high-speed rail is now beginning to look less prescient and more problematic. A July crash that left 40 dead has led to further investigations, revealing that the haste in which these lines were constructed resulted in a plethora of shoddy construction, much of which will need to be fixed or replaced at considerable cost. The Chinese are also discovering that the costs associated with constructing—and maintaining—high speed rail lines are pricey. The Economist reports that the total cost of their high-speed-rail lines may eventually total nearly $1 trillion, and China’s rail ministry currently has a deficit equal to $330 billion, or 5 percent of GDP. Even when these railways are completed, the government’s obligations will not end. A study by the Center for American Progress notes that a popular Beijing-Tianjin line is losing more than $100 million a year.

HSR will cost $1 trillion – and only the wealthy will use it

Woodward 11 (Chris is a Writer for one news now. “Funding high-speed rail projects 'a shameful act'” http://www.onenewsnow.com/Politics/Default.aspx?id=1294364 February 15, 2011)

A conservative transportation analyst is criticizing the Obama administration's plans to invest more money in high-speed rail projects. The Obama White House recently proposed putting another $53 billion toward high-speed rail projects, a handful of which have received a substantial amount of the $10.5 billion already allotted. Marc Scribner, land-use and transportation policy analyst for the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), has been following these projects from the beginning. He notes that they are "very limited corridors, and quite a few of these are not, like I've pointed out again and again, are not actually high-speed rail." So Scribner contends the new funds are ultimately not "really a drop in the bucket" of the 17,000-mile national high-speed rail network the administration is actually working toward. But though the estimated cost for that project is at $1 trillion, the transportation policy analyst warns that cost is not the biggest problem. "This isn't going to improve mobility. The people who will benefit most from this are wealthier and they tend to live in urban areas," he points out. "People who live in the suburbs aren't going to be seeing the returns from this.

HSR costs will skyrocket before the first shovel is turned – California proves

Cox 11- staff writer at national review online (Wendell, “High-Speed Rail, Budget Buster”, National Review online, January 31, 2011, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/258417/high-speed-rail-budget-buster-wendell-cox#>)

High-speed-rail cost escalation has reached these shores. Even before the first shovel has been turned, California’s high-speed-rail costs have risen at least 50 percent, inflation adjusted. The cost estimates for the first approved section of the Los Angeles–to–San Francisco line, a “train to nowhere” from Corcoran to Borden, indicate escalation beyond $45 billion. In Florida, boosters tell taxpayers that their liability for the Tampa to Orlando high-speed-rail line would be only $280 million, and that, somehow, a private bidder will shower additional billions upon them to pay any cost overruns. Boosters also claim that high-speed rail will provide substantial environmental benefits, reduce highway-traffic congestion, and ease air-traffic congestion. Yet, as Joseph Vranich and I showed in the Reason Foundation’s “Due Diligence” report on California’s high-speed-rail proposal, the cost per ton of greenhouse gas removed would be from $1,900 to $10,000. This is 40 to 250 times what the International Panel on Climate Change research indicates greenhouse-gas removal should cost ($50 per ton). Our estimate does not account for the revised (much lower) ridership projection. Even the rosy reports produced by boosters show that high-speed rail would remove only a small percentage of cars from the roads. The hope of reducing air congestion is just as elusive because travel origins and destinations are so dispersed in the United States and because the number of people forsaking air travel for high-speed rail will be small. Voters gave the new Republican House of Representatives a mandate to cut spending. Zeroing high-speed rail out of the federal budget may be the litmus test. If Congress fails to stop this costly and unnecessary program, it would call into question the commitment to spending reduction.

HSR will cost a staggering $117.6- and that’s only in California

Taylor12 (Jeff is a staff writer for Bakersfield. “California simply can't afford high-speed rail, now or later” http://www.bakersfield.com/opinion/community/x560112310/California-simply-cant-afford-high-speed-rail-now-or-later Mar 29 2012)

California currently has a $9.2 billion deficit, and the 2012-13 deficit will be larger -- much larger, according to a Feb. 27 report released by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office. The LAO report states that California's tax revenue will fall $6.5 billion short of Gov. Jerry Brown's January 2012 budget proposal, and that revenue will decrease even more if voters do not approve his income and sales tax hike initiative later this year. So, according to the LAO, our 2012-13 state deficit will be at least $15.7 billion. In these economically perilous times, how can we even consider obligating ourselves to paying 30 years of interest on state bonds for a $117.6 billion high-speed rail project? Have we lost our minds?

Construction of HSR would cost a staggering $1 trillion – American cannot borrow this much

Quarto 12 (Luke is a staff writer for nvate.com. “High Speed Stakes: Can High Speed Rail make it in the US?” http://nvate.com/4961/high-speed-rail/ June 19, 2012)

True. To build a reasonable High Speed Rail network the U.S. would have to commit at least a staggering $1 trillion to the effort, which is why skepticism often lies heavy on the hearts of those considering construction. America is in no condition to borrow this money, so there would have to be intelligent steps taken towards generating a solid revenue stream for construction.

Even if HSR is successful, the cost is unsustainable – Taiwan proves

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By many measures, Taiwan’s high-speed rail line, which links the island nation from north to south, has been a success. Between 2006, the year prior to the launch of highspeed rail, and 2009, the number of passengermiles traveled by train in Taiwan had increased by 56 percent, while the number of passengers on domestic air service had dropped by 53 percent.36 By 2009, high ridership on its densely populated routes allowed the company that built the line to start turning an operating profit.37 Taiwanese taxpayers, however, are paying a higher price for that success than had been anticipated. Once promised that private capital would pay the entire cost of constructing the line, Taiwan taxpayers have instead been asked to pick up a significant part of the tab. In 1998, the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corporation (THSRC) was awarded a 35-year concession to build and operate Taiwan High Speed Rail (THSR), partially based on THSRC’s promise to build the system without government capital. But the company began to run into difficulty after the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, when it was forced to take out loans with high interest rates in order to pay for the project.38 Like a homeowner saddled with an adjustable rate mortgage, the high-interest debt soon became financially unsustainable, with more than three-fifths of the company’s net income used to pay off these loans.39 As late as 2009, the company was still paying a high 8 percent interest rate on some of its loans.40 In addition, the company was forced, as a result of its status as a concessionaire, to depreciate the value of its assets much faster than it would have under traditional forms of ownership, adding to the financial woes that caused the company to post annual losses that totaled $2.18 billion by 2009.41 Because of the ongoing financial losses, “THSRC shareholders signaled reluctance to invest further in the project, which has led to difficulty for THSRC in securing financing from banks as well,” according to a report by the Utah Foundation.42 A lack of financing led to problems with finishing the project, and when the network opened to the public in 2007, several key stations were incomplete. In order to keep the system operating, the government refinanced THSRC’s loans and contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to the network, even though the original build-operate-transfer plan stipulated that the THSRC build the system without any government capital. The government has opted not to take over the company, expressing no interest in growing its current 40 percent share or investing money beyond the bailout.43

Spending Tradeoff Links

HSR funding trades off with national defense and health care

United States Government Accountability Office, ’09 – the audit, evaluation, and investigation arm of the United States Congress (“High Speed Passenger Rail: Future Development Will Depend on Addressing Financial and Other Challenges and Establishing a Clear Federal Role,” Report to Congressional Requesters, March 2009, preface, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09317.pdf?source=ra>)

Once projects are deemed economically viable, project sponsors face the challenging tasks of securing the up-front investment for construction costs and sustaining public and political support and stakeholder consensus. In the three countries GAO visited, the central government generally funded the majority of the up-front costs of high speed rail lines. By contrast, federal funding for high speed rail has been derived from general revenues, not from trust funds or other dedicated funding sources. Consequently, high speed rail projects must compete with other nontransportation demands on federal funds (e.g., national defense or health care) as opposed to being compared with other alternative transportation investments in a corridor. Available federal loan programs can support only a fraction of potential high speed rail project costs. Without substantial public sector commitment, private sector participation is difficult to secure. The challenge of sustaining public support and stakeholder consensus is compounded by long project lead times, by numerous stakeholders, and by the absence of an established institutional framework.

Solvency

PPPs represent massive risks in HSRs

Dutzik and Schneider (Frontier Group Phineas Baxandall, U.S. PIRG Education Fund) 2011

(Tony and Jordan, “High-Speed Rail: Public, Private or Both?” U.S. PIRG Education Fund) //CL

Private sector companies are likely to play a major role in the construction of high-speed rail lines in the United States. Even as California nears construc- tion of the nation’s first high-speed rail line, however, it remains unclear just how the private sector will participate in building out the nation’s high-speed rail network. Public-private partnerships—or “PPPs”—have come to play an important role in the construction of high-speed rail lines around the world. In a PPP, the public and private sectors are supposed to share the risks, responsibilities and rewards of infrastructure development. The experience with high-speed rail PPPs around the world, however, has been mixed. While PPP arrangements have brought private capital and expertise to the task of building high-speed rail, PPPs have also resulted in cost overruns, government bailouts, and other serious problems for the public. America must learn from these experi- ences and pursue PPPs only in situations in which they make sense—and do so in keep- ing with a series of key principles designed to protect the public interest.