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# \*\*AT: Solvency

### 1NC AT: Solvency

#### [1.] Ridership isn’t competitive

#### [a.] Inherent disadvantages make cost-effective rail a fantasy irrespective of investment

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

5. Mobility Benefits. The mobility benefits of high-speed rail are negligible. Despite huge subsidies, the average residents of France and Japan ride their TGVs and bullet trains just 400 miles a year. With slower trains connecting lower-density cities and regions, the Obama administration's proposed high-speed rail system would be lucky to reach even 100 miles per capita of travel. Even a much more comprehensive, truly high-speed network is unlikely to approach 400 miles per capita because, unlike Europe and Japan, the United States has few major city pairs located close enough for high-speed trains to compete with airlines. High-speed rail's inability to draw more riders should be no surprise considering rail's inherent disadvantages compared with driving and air travel. Driving offers point-to-point convenience, while rail drops most travelers miles from their final destinations. Air service is at least twice as fast as the fastest trains and—since most Americans no longer live or work downtown—leaves average travelers no farther from their destinations than downtown train stations. Though high-speed rail is somewhat competitive on trips of 200 miles or so, it is not the optimal transportation mode at any distance. In sum, a cost-effective high-speed rail system is a fantasy. Modern airliners go much faster than the fastest trains and they do not require expensive infrastructure along their entire routes. Even with a massive government investment, high-speed rail would not likely capture more than about 1 percent of the nation's market for passenger travel. High-speed rail should be killed before it diverts tens of billions of transportation dollars into a black hole, producing negligible benefits.

#### [b.] HSR planners overestimate value to garner political favor – minor forecasting errors have huge impact

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

[Dubious Claims for High-Speed Rail](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#top) Proponents of high-speed rail in the United States make numerous questionable claims and assumptions regarding the technology's costs and benefits. The following are some of the aspects of rail where dubious claims are often made: 1. Costs and Ridership**.** Proponents of high-speed rail projects tend to overstate their benefits and understate their costs. Danish planning professor Bent Flyvbjerg has studied hundreds of government megaprojects, and he argues that project supporters suffer from "optimism bias" regarding the merits of projects, and that they often "strategically misrepresent" project details in order to gain support.[30](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn30) No high-speed rail line has been built from scratch in the United States. But historically, urban passenger rail projects have, on average, gone 40 percent over their projected costs. At the same time, U.S. passenger rail planners typically overestimate ridership by an average of about 100 percent.[31](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn31) California's high-speed rail authority is projecting that the San Francisco to Los Angeles line will be carrying two to three times more passengers by 2020 than Amtrak's entire Boston to Washington corridor currently carries.[32](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn32) A Reason Foundation review of the state rail authority's plan called the ridership projections "the most unrealistic projections produced for a major transport project anywhere in the world."[33](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn33) A report on the California project from the state's Senate Transportation Committee pointed to many major risks of the project, including inaccurate forecasting, uncertainly regarding rights-of-way, and substantial safety issues.[34](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn34) Unlike running a bus system or even an airline, building a rail line requires accurate long-range forecasting. Planning and construction can take many years, and the service life of rail lines is measured in decades. A seemingly minor forecasting error—or a deliberately optimistic estimate—can turn what appears to be a sound investment into an expensive white elephant.

### 1NC AT: Solvency

#### [2.] Won’t get completed – litigation

Kevin J. Grochow, J.D. Candidate, Chapman University School of Law, B.A. History at UC Irvine, “COMMENT: California High-Speed Rail on Track? Bridging the Gap Between Competing Land Use Issues with the California High-Speed Rail Project, Chapman Law Review,” Winter, 2012, 15 Chap. L. Rev. 585]

The United States is in a position to establish a high-speed rail network like those found in Europe and Asia, with the project in California taking the lead. However, one attempt to halt or slow down the project was successful with the challenge to the sufficiency of the EIR in the Town of Atherton case. Even after this initial litigation, which found the majority of the EIR sufficient under CEQA, and resulted in the Rail Authority revising those sections that were not, further litigation is certainly a possibility, with many of the same cities filing suit again on October 4, 2010. Unless allegations are brought that were not alleged in the Town of Atherton litigation, should this issue go to trial the reviewing court will likely look to the project description and land use analysis to ensure that they are now in compliance with CEQA, and will likely conclude that they are. Upon reaching this conclusion, the court should find the EIR for the entire Bay Area-to-Central Valley portion of the high-speed rail route sufficient and in compliance with CEQA. However, there is still much work for the Rail Authority to accomplish on this project, much of which may be susceptible to further litigation. While the EIR examined here likely meets the standards set forth by CEQA, the Rail Authority still must complete EIRs for the other sections of the track, such as the Southern California-to-Central Valley portion. The completion of these EIRs will carry the same risk of inciting other municipalities and parties opposed to the project to challenge the EIRs on their procedural sufficiency under CEQA. While the environmental concerns expressed in these EIRs will likely be different between Southern and Northern California, using the August 2010 Final Program EIR for the Bay Area-to-Central Valley as a template or as a basis for the other sections of the route should dramatically reduce the risk of successful litigation against a future EIR. The Rail Authority has also learned a valuable lesson regarding the possible use of rights-of-way, and should prepare from the outset contingencies not reliant on existing rights-of-way and reflect that preparation in its future EIRs. The lack of such preparation was one of the largest contentions in Town of Atherton, and it ultimately proved costly for the Rail Authority. Even if this EIR, and all others subsequently completed for other portions of the route, are found sufficient under CEQA, parties opposed to the project may find other ways to slow down its progress, with the intention of ultimately stopping it. For example, air carriers whose business is reliant on short-to-medium length distance flights in regions that would be served [\*612] by a high-speed rail service may bring suit to prevent high-speed rail from encroaching on their market share, n169 albeit by making unrelated allegations. n170 However, making sure this, and all subsequent EIRs are sufficiently completed under CEQA is the first step to completing the planning process, and ultimately reaching the implementation of the California high-speed rail system.

#### [3.] Long time to build – multiple delays

Daniel Wood, CSM Staff Writer, GOP critic calls Joe Biden's $53 billion high-speed rail plan 'insanity'. Christian Science Monitor, 08827729, 2/8/2011

But building high-speed rail is no easy process, says Leslie McCarthy, a high-speed rail expert at Villanova University's College of Engineering. "Whether or not a bill would or should pass is the easiest part of all this," she says. "The bigger part of the question is purchasing the land, getting right of ways, zoning issues, environmental impact assessments, laying dedicated tracks in a reasonable amount of time."

She says the typical US highway project can be held up anywhere from three to five years at the low end to 12 to 20 years at the high end. "Legislators and the public aren't aware of the number of federal, state, and local laws that agencies have to comply with that can't be gotten around," she adds.

In fact, the very thing that makes the Northeast so attractive for high-speed rail – its population density – could also make it the most difficult place to build. "There is so much population in the Northeast corridor that I don't know if there is even enough room for the dedicated tracks needed for high-speed rail," says Professor McCarthy. "And if the distances you are going are not sufficient to make efficient use of the high speeds, what's the point?"

### Extensions – No Modal Shift

#### Limited and elite ridership

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

Who would be among the lucky few to enjoy heavily subsidized high-speed train rides? One answer can be found by comparing fares in Amtrak’s New York–Washington corridor. At the time of this writing, $99 will get you from Washington to New York in 2 hours and 50 minutes on Amtrak’s high-speed train, while $49 pays for a moderate-speed train ride that takes 3 hours and 15 minutes. Meanwhile, relatively unsubsidized and energy-efficient buses with leather seats and free Wi-Fi cost $20 for a trip that takes 4 hours and 15-minutes between the two cities. Airfares start at $119 for a 1-hour flight. High-speed rail plans in other parts of the country propose similar fare premiums. Midwest high-speed rail fares “will be competitive with air travel,” says the Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative, and will be “up to 50 percent higher than current Amtrak fares to reflect improved services.”36 Few who pay their own way will spend five times as much for a high-speed train ticket to save less than 90 minutes of their time—and those who value their time that highly would spend another $20 for a plane ticket that would save them an additional hour. Rail advocates respond that high-speed trains have an advantage over flying when adding the time it takes to get between downtowns and airports. Yet less than 8 percent of Americans work in downtowns.37Who are they? Bankers, lawyers, government officials, and other high-income people who hardly need taxpayer-subsidized transportation.

#### HSR isn’t worth it

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

High-speed rail is a technology whose time has come—and gone. What might have been useful a century ago is today merely an anachronism that would cost taxpayers tens or hundreds of billions of dollars yet contribute little to American mobility or environmental quality. The most ardent supporters of high-speed rail predict that the FRA plan would carry the average American less than 60 miles per year, and in most places outside of California the average would be even less. By comparison, the average American travels by automobile more than 15,000 miles per year. The environmental benefits of high-speed rail are similarly miniscule, and when added to the environmental costs of building high-speed rail lines the net result is certainly negative. Given high costs and tiny benefits, the real impetus behind high-speed rail for some is the desire to change Americans’ lifestyles. Highspeed rail is a part of the administration’s “livability agenda,” which involves increasing the share of families living in multi-family housing while discouraging new single-family homes, and increasing the share of travel on transit and intercity rail while discouraging driving. As Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood recently admitted, the purpose of this campaign is to “coerce people out of their cars.”58 History shows that such behavioral programs are costly and produce few environmental or social benefits.59 Based on these findings, states should apply for their share of the $8 billion in stimulus money solely for safety improvements to existing rail lines, such as better crossing gates. They should not plan to purchase new locomotives and railcars for passenger service that would be both expensive to operate and harmful to the environment. Nor should the Federal Railroad Administration commit the federal government to funding expensive new high-speed lines such as the proposed lines in California or Florida. The United States can do many things to improve transportation networks in costeffective ways that save energy, reduce accidents, and cut toxic and greenhouse gas emissions. High-speed rail is not one of those things.

#### No Modal Transfer – fills up and replaces

Kenneth Button, George Mason University School of Public Policy 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

Additionally, even when there are modal transfers to HSR, without constraints limiting new traffic on other transportation networks, these will simply fill up again: Down’s Law. An example is the impact of the HSR between London and Paris via the Channel Tunnel. There was considerable transfer of traffic from airlines to rail, but this only freed up slots and gates at Heathrow and other airports for longer distance flights using larger aircraft with the result, not only of more pressure for access to the HSR terminals in London and Paris but also for surface access to the airports.6

### Extensions – No Modal Shift

#### HSR isn’t cost-effective – very limited ridership and high investment costs

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

As noted by the Obama White House, the Interstate Highway System truly did revolutionize American travel. Before the interstates, Americans were already using automobiles for more than 70 percent of their travel. But the interstates allowed that travel to be faster, safer, and more wide-reaching. In 1956, the year Congress passed the law funding the interstates, Americans drove about 3,700 miles per capita. By 2004, driving exceeded 10,000 miles per capita for the first time.21 Today, the interstates alone carry more than one trillion passenger miles of travel per year, which is more than 24 percent of all driving and more than 20 percent of all passenger travel.22 Highway fatality rates dropped from 60 per billion miles of driving in 1956 to less than 14 per billion in 2007, partly because the interstates are so much safer than other highways. The interstates also carry half of all heavy truck traffic, which means they move about 16 percent of all freight shipped in the United States.24 In 2007, the average American traveled 4,000 miles and shipped 2,000 ton-miles of freight over the interstates.25 One reason why the interstates are so heavily used is that they go so many places. As of 2007, interstates directly served all 50 states and more than 330 of the nation’s 440 urban areas of more than 50,000 people—not to mention thousands of smaller cities and towns. This means that well over two out of three Americans live and work within a few minutes’ drive of an interstate freeway.26 In contrast, when combined with the existing Boston-to-Washington corridor, the FRA high-speed rail plan would reach only 33 states. Trains would stop in only 65 of the nation’s 100 largest urban areas. For most people in smaller urban areas and towns, the only access to high-speed trains would be by driving to a major city. Even many people in urban areas served by high-speed rail would be closer to airports than downtown rail stations. As a result, high-speed rail lines would move a relatively insignificant amount of passenger travel. A recent report compiling all of the often-optimistic projections of high-speed rail ridership estimated that the FRA highspeed rail lines would carry 20.6 billion passenger miles of travel in 2025—less than 2 percent of what the interstates carried in 2007.27 The average American would travel on the FRA system less than 60 miles a year.28 If the average trip is 225 miles long, the average American would take a round-trip on the FRA system only about every eight years. Since California would have very-high-speed trains, Californians would ride high-speed rail more than the rest of the country, but still less than 300 miles per person per year.29 These low numbers are confirmed by data from France and Japan, the two nations that have invested the most in high-speed rail. Though popular with American tourists, the average residents of France and Japan ride the TGVs (train à grande vitesse) and bullet trains less than 400 miles per year.30 Given the greater geographic expanse and lower population densities of the United States, it seems unlikely that the nation as a whole would ever approach that level of per-capita ridership. Table 1 shows that, when the capital costs are amortized over 30 years at 7 percent interest, interstates are about 10 times more costeffective than high-speed rail. The difference is even starker when it is recognized that users pay for the interstates while general taxpayers would pay for the rail lines. Table 1 shows only capital costs. In 2008, a banner year for Amtrak, the railroad’s operating costs averaged 58 cents per passenger mile. Passenger fares covered less than 32 cents per passenger mile. Some of the difference was covered by Amtrak’s rents of its tracks and property to other railroads and commercial and retail users, but federal and state operating subsidies still amounted to 19 cents per passenger mile.31 By comparison, Americans spent $1.07 trillion on automotive transportation in 2007, including new and used cars, parts, repairs, maintenance, insurance, fuel, tolls, motor fuel and various transportation taxes.32 Travel in autos, light trucks, and motorcycles totaled 4.47 trillion passenger miles in 2007, for an average cost of 24 cents per passenger mile.33 Federal, state, and local governments spent $55.6 billion in general funds on roads in 2007,34 along with $124 billion in gasoline taxes and other highway user fees. The public fund subsidy for roads, which is mostly to local roads and not the highway system, was partly offset by the $22.5 billion in highway user fees diverted to nonhighway purposes.35 But even if the diversions are ignored, highway subsidies amounted to only a little more than a penny per passenger mile. In short, passenger rail operating costs are more than twice as great as automobile operating costs, and the subsidies are more than 15 times as great. Rail proponents expect that high-speed trains would attract more riders than conventional trains, but their operating costs would also be greater, so it is likely that costs and subsidies per passenger mile would be similar to those of Amtrak today.

### Extensions – Won’t Complete

#### Can’t get the land – NIMBY opposition

Zhenhua Chen, PhD student at the George Mason University, School of Public Policy, and is currently working as a graduate research assistant under the supervision of Prof. Jonathan Gifford in the area of transportation policy Transportation Law Journal, Article: Is the Policy Window Open for High-Speed Rail in the United States: A Perspectives from the Multiple Streams Model of Policymaking, Summer, 2011, 38 Transp. L. J. 115

The key to make HSR successful is to establish a dedicated right-of-way so that running at a true high speed can be guaranteed to attract more riders. Unlike other countries, over sixty percent of the land in the United States is privately owned and the government has a very difficult [\*138] time obtaining land for public usage. n143 Because of the high cost of land, as well as constraints from 'Not in My Backyard ("NIMBY")', the cost of HSR turns out to be extremely high. n144 This is why the Acela Express, which runs between two of the most densely populated areas, still cannot achieve a true high speed of over 120 mph on average. n145 It simply doesn't have a dedicated right-of-way, and it even has to run on a shared track with freight trains in some parts of NEC corridor. n146 Building another dedicated right-of-way will face lots of constraints from NIMBY persons. n147 Choosing Florida I-4 rather than other planned national HSR corridors as a starting point is smart because the proposed Tampa-Orlando HSR line will be constructed on the land beside I-4 which is owned by the federal government, so land-acquisition costs are minimal. n148 Also, because the land is almost flat in the I-4 corridor, the cost to build a HSR route will not be too high compared with other corridors. n149 Such a low construction cost is likely to face less opposition both from legislators and the public, and thus, allow the Florida HSR plan to become a reality much faster. If the state and federal financing hold, the first phase of the railway is scheduled to be completed by 2015. n150

### Extensions – Long Timeframe

#### Billions of dollars for each state rail – and takes decades to complete

Daniel Wood, CSM Staff Writer, GOP critic calls Joe Biden's $53 billion high-speed rail plan 'insanity'. Christian Science Monitor, 08827729, 2/8/2011

In what transportation experts say could be a cautionary tale for the rest of the country, the estimates for the cost and finish date of California's signature high-speed rail project have been dramatically altered. The new cost estimate, formally released Tuesday by the California High Speed Rail Authority, is $98.5 billion, more than twice the previous estimate of $43 billion. The finish date is 2034, 14 years later than first predicted. California voters approved a $10 billion bond in 2008 in support of plans to build a high-speed rail corridor to link northern and southern California, with trains reaching 220 m.p.h. The system would link to other rail lines that fanned out across the state. Supporters of the project say this new estimate gives the state planning certainty. But critics are aghast. State Sen. Doug LaMalfa (R) announced plans to introduce legislation asking state voters to reconsider the bond measure they already approved. "The voters were deceived in the original go-around with highly optimistic ridership and cost numbers that have not been borne out," Senator LaMalfa told The Sacramento Bee, saying the larger figures "should have been in front of voters to begin with, so they would have the truth." Officials are rolling out other details of the plan to soften the blow, touting the connections to existing Metrolink rails in large cities, for example. They are also trying to be frank -- and more conservative -- about ridership estimates that critics say are way too high. "This plan represents a new day, a new train, a new beginning for the California High Speed Rail Authority and for our system," said Tom Umberg, chairman of the authority board, in a statement. Some analysts say the turn of events is a welcome bit of honesty, given that massive public-project costs generally balloon beyond expectations. "The story is both shocking and unsurprising at the same time. It's shocking because of the sheer size of the price tag," says Jack Pitney, a political scientist at Claremont McKenna College. "It's unsurprising because big projects often cost far more than the initial estimates." The episode could have an impact on plans for other rail projects nationwide. In February, Vice President Joe Biden announced a plan to put $53 billion in federal funds into a national, high-speed rail network, which could be built in regional sections. But such projects are often more difficult than they seem at first, and California might have bitten off "way too much," says Steve Schlickman, executive director of University of Illinois at Chicago's Urban Transportation Center. "That is based on my personal project experience," he says. "They should have taken a more incremental approach, like the Midwest, which is starting with higher speed of 110 m.p.h." Mr. Pitney says political opposition is likely to grow, especially in California's current fiscal climate. "At a time when government at all levels has to cut back, many voters will wonder why California is spending so much on a system that so few of them will ever ride," he says.

### AT: Downtown Stations Key

#### Ridership isn’t convenient – downtowns fail

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

4. Importance of Downtowns. The assumption that people will want to go where new high-speed train lines would go is a big risk. New rail lines would likely go from downtown to downtown, but downtowns have been losing their importance as job centers for decades. While many people travel between, say, the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas, that does not mean that they travel between downtowns, which will be the primary points served by rail. Jobs and people are spread throughout modern cities in a fine-grained pattern. As economist William Bogart observes, only about 10 to 15 percent of metropolitan jobs are located in central city downtowns—in Los Angeles it is less than 5 percent.[46](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn46) Even when suburban downtowns are counted—only a small fraction of which would be served by high-speed rail—the total is still only 30 to 40 percent.[47](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn47) That means that most people won't find high-speed rail convenient for business travel.

### AT: California

#### California solves now

Jennifer Grzeskowiak, AC and CE Insight Staff, California seeks federal boost for high-speed rail. By: Grzeskowiak, Jennifer, American City & County Exclusive Insight, 4/13/2011

In early April, California applied to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the entire $2.4 billion that Florida returned in March to use for a proposed high-speed rail line from San Francisco to Los Angeles. In a letter accompanying the application, Gov. Edmund Brown referred to California as "the only state moving forward to fulfill President Obama's promise of trains traveling over 200 miles per hour [mph] to connect significant portions of our population." Florida's discarded funds would allow the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) to move forward with the "backbone" of its project, which would run from Merced to Bakersfield with trains reaching speeds of 220 mph, as well as extend the line either north or south. California aims to create a high-speed, long-distance line that would connect the state's major cities and be competitive with airfare, says Jeffrey Barker, deputy executive director for communications, policy and public outreach for CHSRA. "We don't want to make a mistake where we attempt to do high-speed rail, but it's only planned for 85 miles," Barker says. "We are approaching this with a long-term vision." CHSRA is optimistic about securing at least a portion of the funding. "We got half of Wisconsin's and Ohio's returned funds, and that was when Florida was a competitor," Barker says. However, dozens of other states and Amtrak also are vying for the returned money. In April, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood declared the Northeast Corridor an official High-Speed Rail Corridor, allowing Amtrak to apply for the funding. The declaration came after lawmakers from states in the area appealed to LaHood for the change. On the April 4 deadline, Amtrak requested $1.3 billion, with the money designated for overhauls of current infrastructure and new construction. With a $43 billion price tag for the San Francisco to Los Angeles segment, California's timeline for the project is heavily dependent on funding, Barker says. CHSRA so far has secured $5.5 billion in state and federal funds. It also has access to nearly $10 billion in general obligation bonds approved by voters in 2008, as long as the amount is matched by federal money. The state is continuing the project's environment review process and plans to begin construction next year. Success in California could lead to more rail projects in the rest of the country, says John Robert Smith, president and CEO of Washington-based Reconnecting America. "You have Republican and Democratic mayors and governors seeing the wisdom of being involved in high-speed rail," Smith says. "As with the Interstate Highway System, it starts somewhere and creates the vision for how it can unfold in their own state."

#### California plan looks good on paper but it’s estimates should not be trusted

Washington Post, “Hit the brakes on California's high-speed rail experiment”, 1/11/2011

ON PAPER, California appears a promising venue for high-speed passenger trains like the ones that streak across Japan and Western Europe. It's got a string of urban centers from Sacramento to San Diego and lots of flat real estate in between. In 2008, its voters approved a $9.95 billion bond issue to pay about a quarter of the total projected $43 billion cost of a statewide high-speed system. Events since then, however, suggest that this grand plan is still a bit half-baked. In November, the [California High-Speed Rail Peer Review Group](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=9472) informed the legislature that the [project suffers from an undefined business model](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-high-speed-warning-20101207%2C0%2C2332930.story) and the "lack of a clear financial plan." Most damning, the report noted that official estimates of how many people might actually want to ride the system are so unreliable that they "offer little basis for proceeding." Ridership is a crucial variable, because the law authorizing high-speed rail bonds included a ban on state operating subsidies once the system is up and running. The Peer Review Group's report was only the latest in a series of skeptical blue-ribbon documents. But, undaunted, the California High-Speed Rail Authority announced last month that it would at last begin construction - on a stretch connecting not, say, Los Angeles and Anaheim but two obscure locations in the state's rural Central Valley. The 120-mile segment would cost $5.5 billion. [Critics quickly dubbed it a "train to nowhere"](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/us/03borden.html) - a bit unfair, since some of the towns along the way have expensively redeveloped downtowns that may now suffer from the frequent noise and vibration of trains roaring through them. This would be a matter of purely West Coast interest but for the fact that the U.S. government is paying more than half the cost of the new track, including $600 million newly diverted from Midwestern states that rejected the funds. Indeed, the Federal Rail Administration required that the money be spent in the Central Valley. It was the part of the state most likely to be ready to use it by a September 2011 deadline, because local property owners in more populated areas are stirring opposition, which drags out the environmental review process. Given that California's system has attracted zero private capital and has been unable to guarantee any source - governmental or private - for almost half the cost of completion, the obvious risk is that the federal taxpayer will be on the hook for billions of dollars worth of railroad track that may never serve its intended high-speed purpose. But the Obama administration sought the funds, as part of the 2009 stimulus package, and Congress approved them - and so they must be spent. The president has a vision of a national high-speed rail network almost as grand as the interstate highway system. We have our doubts about the ultimate feasibility of this vision, in part because in much of the country passenger rail can't compete with car travel by interstate highways. It's unclear that the public benefits attributed to high-speed rail - reduced carbon emissions and less airport congestion - would outweigh the inevitable operating subsidies, as Amtrak's experience suggests. If federal high-speed rail investment makes sense at all, it's probably in the densely populated Northeast Corridor, where demand for passenger trains is highest. At the very least, California should have to fill in its project's economic and logistical blanks before any more money - from state taxpayers or the rest of us - is spent. Unfortunately, the rule right now seems to be spend first, answer questions later.

### AT: California

#### California rail will fail – estimated costs are higher, projected jobs are lower, and the time it would take makes high-speed rail already outdated

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “[Is California High-Speed Rail Dead?](http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/is-california-high-speed-rail-dead/)”, CATO Institute, 1/17/2012

The CEO and board chair of the California High Speed Rail Authority have [resigned in disgrace](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0113-bullet-resign-20120113%2C0%2C7586034.story) over erroneous cost projections. A peer-review commission created by the California legislature [says](http://www.cahsrprg.com/files/CommentsonCHSRA2010FundingPlan.pdf) the authority’s high-speed rail plan is “not financially feasible.” [Surveys](http://www.surveyusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=a6de7d0b-533c-4fb0-bfea-6fbd5ec746ed) show a majority of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans in the state all oppose construction. Yet the authority’s scheme to build a new rail line capable of moving trains from Los Angeles to San Francisco in two hours and 40 minutes won’t die unless the state legislature kills it. Officially, the authority plans to begin construction by September 2012, despite the fact that it has less than 10 percent of the money it needs to complete the project. The tide definitely turned against the plan when the authority published a new [business plan](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/assets/0/152/302/c7912c84-0180-4ded-b27e-d8e6aab2a9a1.pdf) admitting that estimated inflation-adjusted construction costs had more than doubled from $43 billion to [$98.5 billion](http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/01/local/la-me-high-speed-rail-20111101). Moreover, under the new plan the promised 220-mph trains would not roll until 2033, more than a decade later than voters were promised in 2008. The authority’s credibility was further reduced when it [admitted](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_19609151?IADID=Search-www.mercurynews.com-www.mercurynews.com) that the million jobs it promised were really job-years, and that no more than 60,000 jobs would be created at any given time (and even that was probably an exaggeration). These revelations cost the project the [editorial support](http://www.mercurynews.com/editorials/ci_19634745) of a number of [major papers](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/californias-high-speed-rail-system-is-going-nowhere-fast/2011/11/08/gIQAKni2IN_story.html) that had previously endorsed the project. The 2008 ballot measure that voters narrowly approved authorized the sale of $9 billion in bonds that would eventually have to be repaid by state taxpayers. But those bonds could only be sold if they were matched by funds from federal or other sources. The Obama administration has given the state about $3.5 billion (giving the authority a total of $7 billion) on the condition that construction begin by September 30 and that the first segment constructed be in the Central Valley. The latter condition was made just before the 2010 election in a blatant effort to assist the election campaign of Representative Jim Costa (D-CA) of Fresno (who subsequently won re-election by a mere 3,000 votes). Journalists are now questioning every aspect of the project. The [latest story](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-bullet-exaggeration-20120117%2C0%2C4293248.story) is that “doubts [are being] cast on cost estimates” for the alternative to high-speed rail, which is better highways and airports. I pointed this out back in 2008 in a [Cato report](http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-625.pdf) showing that the highway-airport alternative did far more to reduce congestion than the high-speed rail line, suggesting that a highway-airport alternative that accomplished the same congestion reduction as the rail line would have cost much less. What raises doubts now is the way the cost of the alternative has crept up. When the authority was insisting that the rail line could be built for $43 billion, its highway-airport alternative was estimated to cost $100 billion. When the rail cost jumped to nearly $100 billion, the highway-airport cost mysteriously increased to $171 billion. “There is some dishonesty in the methodology,” says a University of California, Berkeley transportation engineer. “I don’t trust an estimate like this.” California Republicans have introduced a [bill](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_1451-1500/ab_1455_bill_20120109_introduced.html) in the state legislature to prevent any bond sales that would fund the initial construction out of Fresno. Some Democratic legislators [question](http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci_19737239) the project, but it retains the [endorsement](http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/11/local/la-me-bullet-brown-20111111) of Governor Jerry Brown, and since Democrats have majorities of both houses of the legislature, anything could happen. If the legislature doesn’t kill the project, the authority will spend the money it has available to build track capable of moving trains at 220 mph from somewhere south of Fresno to somewhere north of Fresno (though probably not all the way from Bakersfield to Merced). A handful of daily Amtrak trains [might use](http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/27/local/la-me-bullet-train-20111227) those tracks, probably at no more than 110 mph, to save their passengers a few minutes on their trips from Bakersfield to Sacramento. The authority will be betting that someone will come up with the other $92 billion, but at the present time neither the federal government nor the state government has the cash. All this has made rail advocates [increasingly desperate](http://pelosi.house.gov/news/press-releases/2011/12/pelosi-california-high-speed-rail-is-on-track.shtml). While supporters hysterically talk about California’s population growing to [50 million people](http://www.calpirg.org/newsletters/winter11/news-briefs), the truth is that, by the time the state could ever finish a high-speed rail line, the technology will have been completely superseded by such things as [driverless cars](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/06/science/sebastian-thrun-self-driving-cars-can-save-lives-and-parking-spaces.html) and improved air service. Although the failure of the California scheme will [end Obama’s dream](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/plans-for-high-speed-rail-are-slowing-down/2012/01/13/gIQAngYc1P_story.html) of a national high-speed rail system, California needs high-speed rail like it needs a $100 billion hole in its budget.

### AT: Northeast Corridor

#### HSR in NEC will fail – Amtrack never going to be profitable

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation. “President Obama Sees Amtrak as Key to America’s Transportation”, Heritage.org, March 28, 2011.

Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane,  Ain’t got time to take a fast train.  Lonely days are gone, I’m a-goin’ home, ‘Cause my baby just a-wrote me a letter. —Box Tops, “The Letter” (1967) President Obama’s High-Speed Rail (HSR) program came to its unofficial end on March 11 when Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced that the $2.4 billion in federal money promised to Florida would instead be redirected to passenger rail projects in other states. Florida’s new governor Rick Scott followed the examples of Governors John Kasich (R–OH) and Scott Walker (R–WI) in February when he rejected a federal grant of $2.4 billion to fund an HSR line between the Orlando and Tampa. Scott argued that the project’s future subsidies and projected cost overruns would burden Florida’s taxpayers and could not justify a costly project that would serve only a small fraction of the state’s travelers.[[1]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation#_edn1) With Amtrak now the key to the President’s rail program, a review of Amtrak’s recent performance reveals that this “transformational” event will take place upon a foundation of epic failure, gross mismanagement, and union featherbedding. Shift to Slow-Speed Rail While Florida’s grant of $2.4 billion was one of several dozen such passenger rail awards provided by the FRA in 2009 and 2010, it was one of only two (California being the other) that were targeted for genuine HSR service—i.e., trains that average 150 miles per hour (mph) or more. The other grants were targeted to freight railroads to make track, station, and signal improvements to allow somewhat higher speeds for existing and proposed Amtrak service. For example, the rejected Ohio rail project would have an average speed of only 39 mph,[[2]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn2) slightly less than the top speed of Henry Ford’s Model T, introduced in 1908. And while the California project remains on the books as the only genuine HSR proposal still standing, escalating cost estimates (now at $63 billion compared to the initial $43 billion)[[3]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation#_edn3) and an absence of viable funding options by the bankrupt state suggest that this line will never be built. As a result, what is left of Obama’s once lofty “transformational transportation” plan is now little more than an extravagant Amtrak bailout plan costing $53 billion over six years.[[4]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation#_edn4) Amtrak’s Poor Performance Amtrak often boasts of its record ridership, and in its fiscal year (FY) 2008 annual report, its president noted that 2008 marked Amtrak’s sixth consecutive year of record ridership. What is unmentioned is that Amtrak accounts for less than one half of 1 percent of all interstate passenger travel, and 40 percent of that travel occurs in the Northeast Corridor (NEC). Moreover, while its promotional materials suggest that Amtrak is the dominant mode of travel in that corridor, in fact it accounts for only a small fraction of NEC travel. According to Amtrak data, “Amtrak Rail” has a 6 percent market share in the NEC intercity market, with air at 5 percent and highway at 89 percent.[[5]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn5) This modest market share stems from rider disinterest, not seat availability. Amtrak’s load factor in 2010 averaged 47 percent, and Acela clocks in at about 55 percent, leaving plenty of available seats.[[6]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn6) Ridership has also faltered. As Amtrak data reveal, FY 2008 was the high-water mark for ridership in recent years. Ridership fell in FY 2009 and returned only to 2008 levels in 2010, when it reached 28.7 million nationwide,[[7]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn7) about 10 million fewer passengers than went through the Phoenix airport in 2009.[[8]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn8) To achieve this incidental market share, Amtrak required a federal taxpayer subsidy of $4.4 billion over the three fiscal years in question. As a result, Amtrak receives the highest per-passenger federal subsidy of any mode: $237.53 per 1,000 passenger-miles compared to $4.23 per 1,000 passenger-miles for commercial aviation.[[9]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn9) The $117 Billion Boondoggle Notwithstanding Amtrak’s long history of financial and market failure, President Obama is betting America’s transportation future on this hapless enterprise. He is not alone: As the President’s HSR program has collapsed from public rebuke, rail hobbyists, unions, foreign manufactures, Congressmen, and Amtrak management now recommend rebuilding Amtrak’s NEC to accommodate HSR. Amtrak claims that it would cost $117 billion to do this, while others note—falsely—that the NEC and its pseudo-HSR Acela line already operate at a profit. So what’s to lose? Well, $117 billion for starters. Notwithstanding popular mythology, Amtrak’s NEC and Acela operate at a substantial loss. Amtrak’s management has never claimed NEC profitability, but its supporters do, and management is complicit in its silence. The false claim of profitability is based on Amtrak’s inadequate line-by-line accounting standards that exclude several important costs, notably depreciation and interest expense, which in FY 2010 totaled $695.2 million. If one takes the (very) conservative approach of allocating 40 percent (NEC’s ridership share) of this $695.2 million cost to NEC operations, then the addition of $278 million in costs turns the purported NEC surplus of $51.5 million[[10]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/president-obama-sees-amtrak-as-key-to-americas-transportation%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn10) into a loss of $226.6 million. Now Up to Congress Having been thwarted in his initial HSR plans by several newly elected, fiscally conservative governors, the President has shifted his costly “transformational” rail program to Amtrak, where only Congress gets to decide. With Amtrak requiring at least $1.6 billion per year just to provide the current level of mediocre and underutilized service, the President’s redirected challenge will test the mettle of the new Congress. Will it meet the challenge with the same gutsy determination as did Governors Scott, Kasich, and Walker? Or will it be business as usual in the go-along-to-get-along world of Washington, D.C.? Fiscal conservatives are waiting and watching.

### AT: Midwest

#### Governors will reject funding

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Despite the President’s continued enthusiasm for his HSR proposals, several major setbacks have occurred over the past year, including the realization by most Americans that they preferred to live in the 21st century, not the late 19th. In January 2010, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that it would spend more than half of the $8 billion in the so-called HSR grants on for-profit freight railroads to benefit existing slow-speed Amtrak lines and proposed Amtrak-style service. At the same time, as citizens of states receiving the money began to inspect the Obama plan’s cost estimates, travel benefits, and long-term subsidy obligations more closely, support for HSR began to wane, and gubernatorial candidates in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida who opposed or were skeptical about HSR won their elections. The new governors of Wisconsin and Ohio have since canceled their states’ programs, and the Florida program, one of only two real HSR programs funded by the FRA, is under review by the new governor. The California program, the only other real HSR proposal, will likely not be built because of its exceptionally high cost and California’s long-term, systemic fiscal crisis. Despite Congress’s commitment of significant funding to the program and the President’s giddy excitement about an America transformed by an inefficient, inconvenient, and wildly expensive mode of travel, the President’s HSR program is in a state of collapse. The new Congress should put an end to what little life remains in this futile and costly exercise and use any recovered funds for deficit reduction.

#### California and Midwest couldn’t cover costs

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System, it debated whether it should pay for highways using tolls or taxes on gasoline, tires, trucks, and autos.16While the latter was selected, everyone agreed that users, not general taxpayers, would pay the cost. In fact, gasoline taxes and other user fees covered 100 percent of the cost of the Interstate Highway System. In contrast, no one expects that high-speed rail fares would come close to paying for the costs of building and operating the rail lines. The California High-Speed Rail Authority anticipates that fares would exceed the costs of operating its rail line by enough to cover 19 to 22 percent of the capital costs.17 But this is based on an extremely optimistic projection that the lines would attract more than three times as many riders as Amtrak currently carries in its Boston-to-Washington corridor, even though the Amtrak corridor has more people than the California corridor is projected to have when the trains are in service.18 The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative estimates that its moderate-speed trains would eventually—though not right away—earn enough revenue to pay for their operating costs, but not enough to pay any part of the capital costs.19 Like the California plan, the Midwest plan optimistically projects that increasing top speeds from 79 to 110 mph— which means increasing average speeds from about 45 to about 65 mph—would attract four times as many riders as Amtrak currently carries on these routes. In actual practice, Amtrak fares cover operating costs only on its premium-priced highspeed Acela trains between Washington and Boston. Other Boston-to-Washington trains lost more than $11 per passenger in 2001, and the Boston-to-Washington corridor as a whole lost $2 per passenger. In that same year, 110- mph trains in other Amtrak corridors lost between $8 and $72 per passenger.20 This suggests that California’s high-speed trains might come close to covering their operating costs, but moderate-speed trains in other parts of the country are not likely to do so. In short, while the Interstate Highway System was paid for out of user fees, all or nearly all of the capital costs and at least some of the operating costs of the FRA rail system would have to be covered out of general tax dollars. The fact that user fees are not going to cover these costs is a strong indication that the system is unnecessary and wasteful.

### AT: Florida

#### Rick Scott shut it down

Petra Todorovich et al, Daniel Schned, and Robert Lane, director of America 2050, associate planner for America 2050 and senior fellow for urban design at Regional Plan Association and founding principal of Plan & Process LLP, “High-Speed Rail International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers”, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2011

The two states that had already developed plans for Core Express high-speed rail were the most successful in the competition for federal funding. California voters had passed a $9 billion bond act in 2008 to fund a Core Express high-speed rail project connecting Northern and Southern California, and the state was awarded federal grants of approximately $3.6 billion. Florida, which was able to resubmit its high-speed rail proposal from the 2000s, was awarded a total of $2.4 billion for the initial Tampa–Orlando segment of the statewide high-speed rail project. However, this project was cancelled in early 2011 by newly elected Governor Rick Scott. The remaining federal grant awards went to conventional rail projects, such as those in Washington and Illinois, for projects to increase the speed, reliability, and frequency of passenger rail services on shared passenger and freight corridors.

#### Florida wont have it

Ronald D. Utt is the Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Heritage Foundation’s Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies, “The Death of a High-Speed-Rail Program”, Heritage.org, April 11, 2011.

On March 4, 2011, the Florida supreme court unanimously confirmed Gov. Rick Scott’s authority to reject $2.4 billion in federal funding to build an 84 mile high-speed-rail (HSR) line connecting Tampa to the Orlando Airport and Disney World. Governor Scott had rejected the funds in late February, but the combined power and vast financial resources of the federal government, multinational high-speed-rail builders, some local governments, and the Florida business community worked to find a legal loophole with which to circumvent Scott’s repeated rejections. As a result of the court decision, the project has joined the Ohio and Wisconsin pseudo-HSR proposals, which were rejected by governors John Kasich and Scott Walker, respectively. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has announced that he will redeploy the rejected $2.4 billion to other, more willing states, and on April 6, 2011, he announced that the Department of Transportation would be selecting among the 90 new applicants seeking the funds. None of these projects are for genuine HSR, and instead focus on improving existing slow-speed Amtrak service. While much of this has been in the national news, what most journalists and commentators have overlooked is the decisive role a handful of pro-market think tanks and Tea Party activists played in putting these projects in the morgue. Beginning in early 2009, when Congress agreed to fund Obama’s new HSR plan with $8 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, analysts at Cato, Reason, and Heritage, working both individually and collectively (through the American Dream Coalition), began to produce work that was critical of the proposals. Cato and Heritage (note: I work at the latter) published several overview papers on the subject, Heritage hosted a total of four seminars, and the Reason Foundation arranged for detailed studies of the California and Florida proposals. Ken Orski, publisher of Innovation Briefs, hammered away with weekly skeptical articles that were widely circulated through the transportation-policy community and media. As the issue heated up and the projected costs soared, think tanks’ work in this area led to scores of interviews with journalists who were becoming increasingly skeptical of the administration’s claims. By early 2011, even the Washington Post and the New York Times expressed doubts about the plan. The first victory came in Hillsborough County, Fla. (near Tampa), where the local Tea Party had established an organization called “No Tax for Tracks.” The name referred to a proposal to hike local taxes to pay for a light-rail line that would connect the area to the proposed Tampa/Orlando HSR line. In September of 2010, the group held a rally to encourage people to vote “no” in a referendum on the proposal, and several members of the American Dream Coalition spoke at the event. Despite being outspent $1,600,000 to $25,000 by the business community and opposed by the political establishment, the Tea Party won, and funding for the light-rail line was defeated. Having won against overwhelming odds, the Tampa Tea Party activists turned their attention to Florida’s proposed HSR boondoggle. During the 2010 campaign, Republican gubernatorial candidate Rick Scott expressed skepticism about the HSR plan and promised a thorough review of it if elected. Scott was elected and did conduct the review, which was influenced by — and several times quoted — the Reason Foundations’s analysis. At the same time, the Hillsborough County Tea Party team, joined by allies throughout the state and supported by the think tanks, went to work opposing the project. In the process, they met with media, elected officials, and the new governor. By late February, they had convinced enough of those in need of convincing, and the project seemed dead. But not quite. President Obama’s refusal to let go of this scheme, and his ability to expend vast sums of taxpayer dollars to keep it alive, allowed it to flounder along for a week or two after the court’s ruling as his aides tried to circumvent the decision. In the end, the Florida project died, and with the California HSR project unlikely to be built because of high costs and tight budgets, all that is left of the Obama rail plan is an effort to increase spending on Amtrak.   The success of this effort illustrates how a small number of dedicated people with limited money but lots of energy and commitment can take on powerful forces and bring them to heel. As the Miami Heraldnoted, Governor Scott “said he made the decision based on a verbal review of the ridership study, as well as documents provided by the libertarian Reason Foundation and the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.” Importantly, the majority in Congress agrees: The House Budget Resolution for FY2012 states that “the threat of large, endless subsidies is precisely the reason governors across the country are rejecting federally-funded high-speed rail projects. This budget eliminates these projects which have failed numerous and clear cost-benefit analyses.”

### AT: Florida

#### Florida was the last hope

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Obama and Japan Bribe Florida to Stay with the Plan. With several states rejecting the President’s HSR plan and returning hundreds of millions of dollars in unwanted federal subsidies, and with California unlikely to build its system, the President and Secretary LaHood have turned their attention and the taxpayers’ resources to a costly attempt to keep the faltering Florida program alive. Because the Florida and California systems were the only genuine HSR projects in the President’s plan, failure in Florida would reduce the President’s program to nothing more than a costly and unneeded subsidy for profitable, privately owned freight railroads. A failure in Florida would also leave many foreign manufacturers and foreign engineering and consulting services without the multibillion-dollar contracts that they had hoped to win and in which they had “invested.” Spain’s Talgo had been actively working the Wisconsin project but will close its Wisconsin plant in 2012 because the state terminated the project, Germany’s Siemens funded an economic analysis of the benefits of HSR for the Orlando– Tampa region, France’s TGV has sponsored HSR conferences in the Midwest, China has been poking around the California project, and Japanese companies and the Japanese government have been looking at opportunities in all of the projects but have since focused on the Florida project as the other opportunities in the U.S. have disappeared or diminished. During his successful 2010 gubernatorial campaign in Florida, Rick Scott (R) expressed skepticism about the value of the project and promised a careful review of it if he was elected. He promised that concerns for the taxpayer would be paramount in his decision. Governor Scott has since begun that review, and the President and the Global High Speed Rail Industrial Complex are making every effort to ensure that he decides in favor of the project. With the Wisconsin and Ohio projects terminated and California unlikely to build its HSR system, introducing HSR into America now depends entirely upon Florida, and the U.S. and Japanese governments are piling on the subsidies to ensure that this happens before Congress ends the program. The 84-mile line connecting the Orlando airport with downtown Tampa is projected to cost $2.7 billion.[[10]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn10) The FRA initially offered to cover $1.25 billion of the cost in the first round of grants awarded in January 2010. Despite growing opposition and skepticism across the nation, Congress appropriated an additional $800 million to the Florida project in October 2010, and the President added $342 million in December from the HSR funds returned by Wisconsin and Ohio. Altogether, the federal government has promised to cover $2.4 billion of the projected $2.7 billion cost, leading one Florida journalist to speculate that “if we hold out a little longer, they’ll come back and give every Floridian an extra $100 and a free puppy.”[[11]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn11)

### AT: Europe Proves

#### Europe fail

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

[European Experience](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#top)

Europe's experience with high-speed rail provides another cautionary tale for the United States. As in Japan, high-speed rail in Europe is a money loser and it carries relatively few passengers. Italy introduced high-speed trains to Europe in 1978, and France followed with the Paris-Lyon train à grande vitesse (TGV) in 1981. Germany and other countries followed a few years after that. France has been the European leader in high-speed rail. French trains carry 54 percent of Europe's high-speed rail passenger-miles, followed by Germany at 26 percent, and Italy at 10 percent. More than half of all rail travel in France is on high-speed trains, but in the overall European Union, nearly four out of five rail passengers still travel at conventional speeds.[20](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn20) When operating at high speeds, the French TGVs run on dedicated tracks. But TGV trains also operate on conventional tracks at normal speeds. In fact, while TGV trains may be seen throughout France, they only operate at high speeds between Paris and a few other cities. Germany's high-speed intercity express trains operate at their highest speeds only on selected routes, such as Berlin-Hamburg. High-speed rail has done little to change European travel habits. In 1980, intercity rail accounted for 8.2 percent of passenger travel in the 15 countries in the European Union at the time.[21](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn21) By 2000, the share in those countries had declined to 6.3 percent, and it has fallen further since then.[22](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn22) Meanwhile, automobiles have modestly gained market share in recent decades. But the real challenge to high-speed rail has come from low-cost airlines. Thanks to deregulation of European airlines, the domestic airline share of passenger travel has more than doubled.[23](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn23) Because of the prominence of high-speed rail in France and Germany, rail has a higher share of passenger travel in those countries than in the rest of Europe. But the automobile's share of travel in both France and Germany is also higher than in the rest of Europe. The average French resident travels 7,600 miles per year by auto.[24](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn24) By comparison, the average French resident travels about 400 miles per year on high-speed trains. In the European Union as a whole, the average is only about 100 miles per year.[25](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn25) Rail's higher share in France and Germany comes at the expense of bus travel, not auto driving. Rail's declining importance in Europe has come about despite onerous taxes on driving. Much of the revenue from those taxes is effectively used to provide large subsidies to rail. French economist Rémy Prud'Homme estimates that taxpayers "pay about half the total cost of providing the service."[26](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn26) And because of the limited ridership on high-speed rail, it has done little to relieve highway congestion. "Not a single high-speed track built to date has had any perceptible impact on the road traffic carried by parallel motorways," says Ari Vatanen, a member of the European Parliament, in his summary of a 2005 conference on European transport.[27](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn27) Europe's passenger-travel mix is similar to that of the United States. The big difference is that European intercity rail carries a 5.8 percent share of the travel market compared with Amtrak's 0.1 percent. The massive subsidies Europe pours into high-speed rail may not even explain this difference, given that the European percentage is steadily declining despite those subsidies. Instead, the answer may be that Europe's lower incomes and high taxes on autos and fuel have simply slowed the growth of driving. European planners predict that rail and bus's combined share will continue to decline.[28](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn28) As in Japan, Europe's emphasis on passenger rail has had a profound effect on freight rail. While a little more than one-fourth of American freight goes on the highway and more than a third goes by rail, nearly three-fourths of European freight goes on the road and just a sixth goes by rail. Moreover, rail's share of freight movement is declining in Europe—it was 22 percent in 1980—but it increased in the United States from 27 percent in 1980 to 39 percent in 2007.[29](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn29) Rail's low share in carrying freight in both Japan and Europe suggests that the Obama administration's hope of getting both people and freight off the highways and onto trains may a pipedream: a country or region can apparently use its rail system for passengers or freight, but not both. The fact that American freight railroads are profitable while European passenger lines are not suggests that freight, not passengers, is the highest and best use of a railroad system in most places. Thus, a government initiative to spend tens of billions of dollars on passenger rail in the United States might get a small percentage of cars off the road, but a consequence may be to increase the number of trucks on the road.

### AT: Europe Proves

#### UK rail requires massive subsidies – even after privatization

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

United Kingdom . In the U.K., 6.4 percent of surface passengers (excluding air and sea travel) travel by a passenger rail system that was privatized beginning in 1994 by way of concessions provided to private rail operators. Much like Japan, the U.K. decided to privatize its passenger rail system because of the burden of providing operating subsidies and the lack of government financial resources to refurbish the deteriorating infrastructure. Importantly, while a Conservative government implemented the privatization process, the subsequent Labor government made no effort to halt or undo the privatization process, despite the many problems that have emerged in the operations of the privatized rail system. Although service has improved and ridership has increased to record levels since privatization, ticket prices have also increased, and government subsidies have exceeded pre-privatization levels.[[15]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn15) In the 1994-1995 budget year, just before privatization, government rail subsidies totaled an inflation-adjusted &pound;2,178 million ($3.4 billion), but after more than a decade of privatization, government rail subsidies for the 2008-2009 budget year totaled &pound;4,896 million ($7.6 billion).[[16]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn16) Demonstrating that poor judgment is not unique to any one party or ideology, the opposition Conservative Party has promised to introduce HSR if it is returned to power, notwithstanding the high subsidy costs and high government deficits incurred by maintaining an ordinary passenger rail service used by just 6.4 percent of the market.[[17]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn17) In response, the Labor Party has promised to build an HSR rail line connecting London to Manchester and Leeds at an estimated cost of $45 billion.[[18]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn18) The point of reviewing the recent U.K. experience is not to criticize the rail reforms that the U.K. undertook, but to note that regardless of organization, ownership, and the intensity of the reform effort, building and operating a system of passenger rail service still requires massive public subsidies.

#### Spain isn’t getting it done

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

Spain. Spain opened its first HSR line in 1992. Since 2003, it reportedly has spent more on rail than on roads.[[22]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn22) Despite this commitment, the EU reports that rail in Spain accounts for only 5.1 percent of ridership, almost 2 percentage points below the EU-27 average of 6.9 percent for all surfacetransportation modes.[[23]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn23)

#### French are exception – not the rule

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

France. The French government operates 30,500 miles of track, 1,160 miles of which are genuine HSR lines (called TGV) that have average speeds of about 180 mph. Although the entire French passenger rail system receives an estimated annual government subsidy of approximately $10 billion (compared to the annual estimated subsidy of $22.8 billion for the somewhat larger German passenger rail system, which also includes an HSR component),[[19]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn19) the HSR service between Paris and Lyon--one of 11 TGV lines and 267 miles of the system--is believed by some to be one of only two HSR routes in the world that generate enough revenue to cover both capital and operating costs.[[20]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn20)

### AT: Japan Proves

#### Japan Fail

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

Japan . Japan's passenger rail--both high speed and not-so-high speed--has been extremely costly and has been a contributing factor in the genteel process of decline now enveloping this onetime economic superpower.[[12]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn12) Japan began operating an HSR system in 1964 at speeds of about 130 mph. By the 1990s, speeds in excess of 180 mph were common. As a result of this commitment to HSR and the costs associated with the rest of the passenger rail system, the Japanese National Railway (JNR) was losing $20 billion per year and was issuing debt to cover all but the $5 billion covered by direct government subsidies. By the mid-1980s, the JNR's accumulated debt exceeded $300 billion. Recognizing that the JNR was not financially sustainable as a government program, the government began privatizing the passenger rail system in 1987, converting the JNR into seven separate joint stock companies and selling them off to the public over the next several years.[[13]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn13) In Japan, unlike the United States, where Amtrak's losses can be attributed to half-filled trains, a trivial market share, and powerful unions, about 28.7 percent of passengers traveled by rail in 2007--the highest rate of rail use in the developed world.[[14]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn14) Today, several of the restructured, privatized Japanese passenger rail lines run at a profit, but only because they were acquired at a fraction of their capital costs and the government absorbed much of the system's debt.

#### Japan fail

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

[Japanese Experience](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#top)

Probably no country in the world is better suited to high-speed rail than Japan. From Greater Tokyo, one of the world's largest and densest metropolitan areas, rail lines travel to chains of other large, dense cities typically located 25 to 50 miles apart. As of 1949, most rail lines in Japan were owned by Japanese National Railways (JNR), a government corporation. Although nationalized, JNR was not subsidized and had earned a profit, or at least broken even, every year until it began building high-speed rail lines. As of 1960, Japanese rail lines carried conventional trains at conventional speeds. In that year, autos accounted for just 5 percent of Japanese travel, while rails carried 77 percent. Then construction began on the Shinkansen, the world's first high-speed rail system. The first bullet train between Tokyo and Osaka proved highly profitable, and it has carried more people than all other high-speed rail trains in the world combined. Once this line was built, however, Japanese politicians demanded bullet trains for their own cities and prefectures. With one exception, all lines built since the first one have lost money.[14](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn14) Japan's experience shows that once a nation starts building high-speed rail, political forces make it hard to stop. Despite the need for huge subsidies that Japan cannot afford, the nation's taxpayers are forced to pay for high-speed lines into the prefectures of every powerful politician in the country. These and other political factors have driven up bullet train costs, and caused Japanese National Railways to switch from a profit-making venture, before 1964, to a money loser ever since.[15](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn15) JNR raised passenger fares, but that only pushed more people off the trains and into automobiles. Total automobile travel surpassed rail travel in 1977 and has kept on growing. Between 1965 and 2005, per capita driving increased by more than 900 percent, while per capita rail travel increased only 19 percent.[16](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn16) By 1987, expansion of bullet-train services and other below-cost operations had swelled JNR's debt to more than $350 billion.[17](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn17) That high debt load led to a financial crisis, which significantly contributed to the nation's economic woes of the last two decades. The government was forced to absorb JNR's debt and privatize the railways. As of 2007, rail's share of Japanese passenger travel had declined to 29 percent, which may still be more than in any other country in the world. And the average Japanese person travels about 1,950 miles per year by train, which is definitely more than people in any other country. But only about 20 percent of those rail miles are by high-speed rail.[18](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn18) Automobiles carry 60 percent of passenger travel, and the remainder is divided between bus and domestic air. After adjusting for inflation, Japan has spent about the same amount of money per capita on high-speed rail as the United States has spent on the interstate highway system.[19](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn19) Yet the returns to Japan's mobility from its investment are far smaller: the average American travels 10 times as many miles on the interstates as the average Japanese travels by high-speed rail. A final interesting feature of the Japanese government's emphasis on passenger rail is that it has had a detrimental effect on freight rail. Rail carries only about 4 percent of Japanese freight, while highways carry 60 percent. By contrast, more than a third of freight goes by rail in the United States, while highways carry a little more than one-fourth.

### AT: Taiwan Proves

#### Taiwan – try and fail

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

Taiwan. In 2007, a privately owned and partially privately financed HSR system began operating HSR on a 214-mile route connecting Taipei and Kaoshiung, the two largest cities in Taiwan. Building the system cost an estimated $15 billion. It uses Japanese technology, and the trains run at a top speed of 186 mph.

Since opening, the system has lost $2.1 billion, leading The China Post to describe the situation as a "hyper-modern technology [that] was meant to be a source of pride, but instead has turned into a rich source of embarrassment."[[21]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn21) The company operating the system is now seeking government subsidies.

# \*\*AT: Warming Advantage

### 1NC AT: Warming Advantage

#### [1.] Developing high-speed rail have a net negative effect on the environment

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

When announcing his high-speed rail vision, President Obama promised highspeed rail would provide “clean, energy-efficient transportation.”38Many people assume that trains use significantly less energy and produce less pollution and greenhouse gas emissions than other forms of travel. In fact, passenger rail’s environmental benefits are negligible and costly. Amtrak claims its trains are more energyefficient than driving, but it bases this claim on an assumption that the average automobile has just 1.6 occupants.39 In fact, autos tend to carry more people in the intercity travel that would compete with high-speed rail. An independent analysis for the California High- Speed Rail Authority found that intercity autos average 2.4 people.40This makes Amtrak only 8 percent more energy efficient than light trucks and 15 percent less energy efficient than cars. As a Department of Energy report concluded in 2000, “intercity auto trips tend to be relatively efficient highway trips with higherthan- 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.”41 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 indirect impact to the environment.”42 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.43 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.44 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.45 • The average automobile on the road carries 1.6 people.46 As previously noted, occupancies for intercity travel are closer to 2.4. • Airline energy efficiencies would grow by 0.6 percent per year.47 In fact, airline energy efficiencies have grown by 3.2 percent per year since 1970.48 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.49 • The average high-speed train in every corridor would operate at 70 percent of passenger capacity.50 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.51 These are examples of what Danish planning professor Bent Flyvbjerg calls “optimism bias.”52 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.53 That means the plan itself is projected to save only 2.3 million metric tons per year. Substituting more realistic assumptions greatly changes the results. In the 19 years between 1975 and 1994, automobile fuel economies increased by 33 percent and commercial airline economies increased by 44 percent. 54 If they achieve similar efficiencies in the 19 years between 2006 and 2025, and if the average auto carries 2.4 people in intercity travel and the average high-speed train fills only 51 percent of its seats, then rather than save 2.3 million metric tons of CO2 per year, highspeed trains would instead add 220,000 metric tons of CO2 to the atmosphere each year. Moreover, not building high-speed rail would save huge amounts of energy and millions of tons of CO2 that would otherwise be used and released during construction. Even if all the Center for Clean Air Policy’s optimistic assumptions proved correct, highspeed rail would not be a cost-effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. McKinsey and Company estimates the United States can cut its greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 by investing in technologies that cost no more than $50 per metric ton of abated emissions. 55 But if high-speed rail costs $90 billion, then the cost per metric ton averages well over $3,000. For every ton abated through the use of high-speed rail, more than 60 tons of abatement could have been carried out using more cost-effective programs that reduce CO2 at a cost of $50 a ton or less. People who truly want to save energy should focus on intercity buses, which are far more energy efficient than high-speed rail, and on improving the energy efficiency of auto driving. 56 Traffic congestion wastes nearly 3 billion gallons of fuel per year, and low-cost solutions to congestion, such as traffic signal coordination, could save far more energy at a tiny fraction of the cost of high-speed rail.57

### 1NC AT: Warming Advantage

#### [2.] No Solvency - CO2 tradeoff isn’t large enough

Edward L. Glaeser, econ prof at Harvard, Is High-Speed Rail a Good Public Investment?, 2009. <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/28/is-high-speed-rail-a-good-public-investment/>

Trains reduce carbon emissions and the world should reduce its carbon footprint, but those two facts don’t make the case for rail. Trains make sense only if they are a cost-effective means of reducing carbon in the atmosphere, or whether the social benefit of eliminating 113 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions can outweigh the costs of rail. A recent review article looked at the dollar cost to the world of each additional ton of carbon dioxide emissions. Most estimates found that a ton of carbon dioxide causes less than $20 worth of damage. Put another way, eliminating a ton of carbon dioxide would bring about $20 worth of benefits. (The one big outlier to these estimates, the Stern Report, shows the benefits of reducing carbon dioxide to be $85 a ton, but that figure has been widely disputed.) A better way to evaluate the benefit of reducing carbon emissions by rail is to look at the cost of reducing carbon emissions by means other than rail. In current carbon offset markets, the average price of an offset is $7.34 for each ton of carbon dioxide. Technologies like carbon capture and sequestration seem to offer the possibility of reducing emissions for less than $50 a ton of carbon dioxide emissions eliminated. I’ll assume a environmental benefit of $50 for eliminating a ton of carbon dioxide emissions. With this figure, the total global-warming-related benefit of 1.5 million high-speed riders taken equally from cars and planes is $4.24 million a year The National Safety Council estimates the total losses due to traffic accidents in 2008 as $237.2 billion. There were about 3 trillion vehicle miles, and 1.63 people per vehicle, so all this safety cost of cars comes to 4.8 cents a passenger mile (which is more than double more standard estimates). Using this 4.8 cent figure, a rail line that displaces 750,000 drivers creates an extra $8.73 million a year of traffic safety benefit. A standard estimate is that cars create 5 cents of congestion damage for each vehicle mile of travel. From the same source, I’ll add in another 2.7 cents per vehicle mile to cover local pollution, fuel dependency issues and road maintenance. This works out to another $8.67 million worth of benefits from reducing the number of drivers by 750,000 Combining reduced carbon emissions, reduced congestion and reduced traffic mortality provides an extra $21.63 million worth of benefits a year from the rail line, which increases the $102 million benefit minus operating costs figure from last week to $124 million, which is still far less than the $648 million estimated cost per year of building and maintaining the infrastructure The environmental and mortality benefits of rail are real, but the magnitude of the social benefits from switching modes seems is quite small relative to the cost of the system.

#### [3.] Warming is inevitable – even if we stop emissions temperatures will continue to rise

Robert Longley, worked with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-14-2008, “Global Warming Inevitable This Century, NSF Study Finds,” http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/technologyandresearch/a/climatetochange.htm

Despite efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and a greater increase in sea level are inevitable during this century, according to a new study performed by a team of climate modelers at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colo. Indeed, say the researchers, whose work was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), globally averaged surface air temperatures would still rise one degree Fahrenheit (about a half degree Celsius) by the year 2100, even if no more greenhouse gases were added to the atmosphere. And the resulting transfer of heat into the oceans would cause global sea levels to rise another 4 inches (11 centimeters) from thermal expansion alone. The team's findings are published in this week's issue of the journal "Science." “This study is another in a series that employs increasingly sophisticated simulation techniques to understand the complex interactions of the Earth,” says Cliff Jacobs of NSF’s atmospheric sciences division.

### 1NC AT: Warming Advantage

#### [4.] No warming – their models are incorrect and satellite data disproves.

Steven Hayward, Weyerhaeuser fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “In Denial,” The Weekly Standard, March 15, 2010. http://www.weeklystandard.com/print/articles/denial)

This central pillar of the climate campaign is unlikely to survive much longer, and each repetition of the “science-is-settled” mantra inflicts more damage on the credibility of the climate science community. The scientist at the center of the Climategate scandal at East Anglia University, Phil (“hide the decline”) Jones dealt the science-is-settled narrative a huge blow with his candid admission in a BBC interview that his surface temperature data are in such disarray they probably cannot be verified or replicated, that the medieval warm period may have been as warm as today, and that he agrees that there has been no statistically significant global warming for the last 15 years—all three points that climate campaigners have been bitterly contesting. And Jones specifically disavowed the “science-is-settled” slogan: BBC: When scientists say “the debate on climate change is over,” what exactly do they mean, and what don’t they mean? Jones: It would be supposition on my behalf to know whether all scientists who say the debate is over are saying that for the same reason. I don’t believe the vast majority of climate scientists think this. This is not my view. There is still much that needs to be undertaken to reduce uncertainties, not just for the future, but for the instrumental (and especially the palaeoclimatic) past as well [emphasis added]. Judith Curry, head of the School of Earth and Atmos-pheric Sciences at Georgia Tech and one of the few scientists convinced of the potential for catastrophic global warming who is willing to engage skeptics seriously, wrote February 24: “No one really believes that the ‘science is settled’ or that ‘the debate is over.’ Scientists and others that say this seem to want to advance a particular agenda. There is nothing more detrimental to public trust than such statements.” The next wave of climate revisionism is likely to reopen most of the central questions of “settled science” in the IPCC’s Working Group I, starting with the data purporting to prove how much the Earth has warmed over the last century. A London Times headline last month summarizes the shocking revision currently underway: “World May Not Be Warming, Scientists Say.” The Climategate emails and documents revealed the disarray in the surface temperature records the IPCC relies upon to validate its claim of 0.8 degrees Celsius of human-caused warming, prompting a flood of renewed focus on the veracity and handling of surface temperature data. Skeptics such as Anthony Watts, Joseph D’Aleo, and Stephen McIntyre have been pointing out the defects in the surface temperature record for years, but the media and the IPCC ignored them. Watts and D’Aleo have painstakingly documented (and in many cases photographed) the huge number of temperature stations that have been relocated, corrupted by the “urban heat island effect,” or placed too close to heat sources such as air conditioning compressors, airports, buildings, or paved surfaces, as well as surface temperature series that are conveniently left out of the IPCC reconstructions and undercut the IPCC’s simplistic story of rising temperatures. The compilation and statistical treatment of global temperature records is hugely complex, but the skeptics such as Watts and D’Aleo offer compelling critiques showing that most of the reported warming disappears if different sets of temperature records are included, or if compromised station records are excluded. The puzzle deepens when more accurate satellite temperature records, available starting in 1979, are considered. There is a glaring anomaly: The satellite records, which measure temperatures in the middle and upper atmosphere, show very little warming since 1979 and do not match up with the ground-based measurements. Furthermore, the satellite readings of the middle- and upper-air temperatures fail to record any of the increases the climate models say should be happening in response to rising greenhouse gas concentrations. John Christy of the University of Alabama, a contributing author to the IPCC’s Working Group I chapter on surface and atmospheric climate change, tried to get the IPCC to acknowledge this anomaly in its 2007 report but was ignored. (Christy is responsible for helping to develop the satellite monitoring system that has tracked global temperatures since 1979. He received NASA’s Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement for this work.) Bottom line: Expect some surprises to come out of the revisions of the surface temperature records that will take place over the next couple of years. Eventually the climate modeling community is going to have to reconsider the central question: Have the models the IPCC uses for its predictions of catastrophic warming overestimated the climate’s sensitivity to greenhouse gases? Two recently published studies funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, one by Brookhaven Lab scientist Stephen Schwartz in the Journal of Geophysical Research, and one by MIT’s Richard Lindzen and Yong-Sang Choi in Geophysical Research Letters, both argue for vastly lower climate sensitivity to greenhouse gases. The models the IPCC uses for projecting a 3 to 4 degree Celsius increase in temperature all assume large positive (that is, temperature-magnifying) feedbacks from a doubling of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; Schwartz, Lindzen, and Choi discern strong negative (or temperature-reducing) feedbacks in the climate system, suggesting an upper-bound of future temperature rise of no more than 2 degrees Celsius. If the climate system is less sensitive to greenhouse gases than the climate campaign believes, then what is causing plainly observable changes in the climate, such as earlier arriving springs, receding glaciers, and shrinking Arctic Ocean ice caps? There have been alternative explanations in the scientific literature for several years, ignored by the media and the IPCC alike. The IPCC downplays theories of variations in solar activity, such as sunspot activity and gamma ray bursts, and although there is robust scientific literature on the issue, even the skeptic community is divided about whether solar activity is a primary cause of recent climate variation. Several studies of Arctic warming conclude that changes in ocean currents, cloud formation, and wind patterns in the upper atmosphere may explain the retreat of glaciers and sea ice better than greenhouse gases. Another factor in the Arctic is “black carbon”—essentially fine soot particles from coal-fired power plants and forest fires, imperceptible to the naked eye but reducing the albedo (solar reflectivity) of Arctic ice masses enough to cause increased summertime ice melt. Above all, if the medieval warm period was indeed as warm or warmer than today, we cannot rule out the possibility that the changes of recent decades are part of a natural rebound from the “Little Ice Age” that followed the medieval warm period and ended in the 19th century. Skeptics have known and tried to publicize all of these contrarian or confounding scientific findings, but the compliant news media routinely ignored all of them, enabling the IPCC to get away with its serial exaggeration and blatant advocacy for more than a decade.

### 1NC AT: Warming Advantage

#### [5.] No Impact[a.] Even if they win warming exists they can’t win it causes extinction

William Yeatman Assistant Director for the Center for Energy and Development, "Global Warming 101: Science," GlobalWarming.org, February 3, 2009. http://www.globalwarming.org/2009/02/03/global-warming-101-science/

In fact, at the 2008 annual meeting of Nobel Prize winners in Lindau, Germany, half the laureates on the climate change panel disputed the so-called consensus on global warming. greenhouseeffectpreview The Greenhouse Effect You have probably heard the dire warnings many times. Carbon dioxide (CO2) from mankind’s use of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas is building up in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas—it traps heat that would otherwise escape into outer space. Al Gore warns that global warming caused by carbon dioxide emissions could increase sea levels by 20 feet, spin up deadly hurricanes. It could even plunge Europe into an ice age. Science does not support these and other scary predictions, which Gore and his allies repeatedly tout as a “scientific consensus.” Global warming is real and carbon dioxide emissions are contributing to it, but it is not a crisis. Global warming in the 21 st century is likely to be modest, and the net impacts may well be beneficial in some places. Even in the worst case, humanity will be much better off in 2100 than it is today. The following is a summary of key points: \* Average Annual Heat-Related Mortality: People will not drop like flies from heat waves in a warming world. Heat-related mortality will continue to decline as the world warms. Average Annual Heat-Related Mortality \* Far more people die each year from excess cold than from excess heat. \* Global warming will not make air pollution worse. \* Global warming will not lead to malaria epidemics in Northern Hemisphere countries. \* Contrary to Gore, no “strong, new scientific consensus is emerging” that global warming is making hurricanes stronger. \* Global Death & Death Rates Due to Extreme Events, 1900-2004: Since the 1920s, death rates related to extreme weather declined by more than 98 percent globally. The impression conveyed by An Inconvenient Truth—that global warming is making the world a more dangerous place—is false. Global Death & Death Rates Due to Extreme Events, 1900-2004 \* Gore’s warning that global warming could shut down the Atlantic branch of the oceanic thermohaline circulation (THC) and plunge Europe into an ice age is science fiction. \* Gore’s warning that sea levels could rise by 20 feet is science fiction. Sea level rise in the 21 st century is likely to be measured in inches, not in feet. \* The world warmed at a rate of 0.17°C per decade since 1978, according to the temperature record compiled by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Since most climate models predict that warming will occur at a constant—that is, non-accelerating—rate, it is reasonable to expect that global warming in the 21 st century will be close to the low end of the IPCC’s forecast range, of 1.4°C to 5.8°C. \* Temperature Measuring Station on Aspault Parking Lot: The actual warming rate may be only half the 0.17°C per decade rate implied in the IPCC temperature record, because the IPCC has not adequately filtered out the warming biases from local factors like urbanization and improper management of monitoring equipment. \* A warming near the low end of the IPCC range would produce both benefits—longer growing seasons, more rainfall, fewer cold deaths—and harms—more heat waves, more drought, some acceleration of sea level rise—but nothing resembling catastrophe. \* Even in the IPCC high-end warming forecasts, human welfare would improve dramatically over the next 100 years. In the IPCC fossil-fuel-intensive development scenario, per capita GDP in developing countries increases from $875 per year in 1990 to $43,000 per year in 2100—even after taking into account an additional 110 years of global warming. Even in the IPCC worst-case scenario, global warming is not the civilization-ending catastrophe Al Gore purports it to be.

#### [b.] Warming will be slow and predictable

Patrick J. Michaels, senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute, The Washington Times, 10/16/2003

Here's what every American needs to know about global warming. Contrary to almost every news report and every staged hearing, including one held by Mr. McCain on Oct. 1, scientists know quite precisely how much the planet will warm in the foreseeable future, a modest three-quarters of a degree (C), plus or minus a mere quarter-degree, according to scientific figures as disparate as this author and NASA scientist James Hansen. The uncertainty is so small, in fact, that publicly crowing this figure is liable to result in a substantial cut in our research funding, which is why the hundreds of other scientists who know this have been so reluctant to disgorge the truth in public. All this has to do with basic physics, which isn't real hard to understand. It has been known since 1872 that as we emit more and more carbon dioxide into our atmosphere, each increment results in less and less warming. In other words, the first changes produce the most warming, and subsequent ones produce a bit less, and so on. But we also assume carbon dioxide continues to go into the atmosphere at an ever-increasing rate. In other words, the increase from year-to-year isn't constant, but itself is increasing. The effect of increasing the rate of carbon dioxide emissions, coupled with the fact that more and more carbon dioxide produces less and less warming compels our climate projections for the future warming to be pretty much a straight line. Translation: Once human beings start to warm the climate, they do so at a constant rate. And yes, it's a sad fact that it took $10 billion of taxpayer money to "prove" something so obvious it can be written in a mere 100 words.

### Extensions – HSR Causes Warming

#### Building Rail will spike global emissions - any savings are too long term

Jonas Westina and Per Kågesona, a Centre for Transport Studies, Royal Institute of Technology b Department of Transport Science, Royal Institute of Technology. Both in Stockholm Sweden Can high speed rail offset its embedded emissions?, Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2012, Pages 1–7

Although high speed in all modes of transport comes at the price of negative environmental impact, many environmentalists, and the companies and interest organizations of the rail sector, claim that high-speed rail is environmentally beneficial and should be allowed to form an important part of climate change mitigation. Independent research, on the other hand, concludes that these benefits may not be that large.1 The embedded CO2 emissions from constructing and maintaining a high speed link is often substantial, partly because of the extensive use of steel and concrete, which are highly energy intensive in their production (Network Rail, 2009). For a new investment in high-speed rail to make sense from a climate perspective, these embedded emissions must be offset by the reduction in greenhouse gases that is the result of traffic shifting from high-emitting modes to rail when the new link is opened. This paper determines the amount of annual passenger trips and the magnitude of shift from other modes that are required for compensating for the embedded emissions from the construction of a reference high-speed rail project, when depreciated over the lifetime of the infrastructure. Since the expected lifetime of the components in the railway differ, the embedded emissions are calculated using a steady-state approach where all components are assumed to be continuously replaced and recycled at the end of their lifetime The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s is to prevent greenhouse gases from exceeding a concentration in the atmosphere that would raise the global mean temperature by more than 2 °C above its pre-industrial level. As the atmosphere under current trends will approach this critical concentration of greenhouse gases within a few decades, the payback time for emissions caused in the near term by large projects must be sufficiently short to prevent them from contributing to an overdraft. We have therefore chosen to calculate the carbon annuity based on a 50-year analysis period starting in 2010. This affects the assumptions with regard to available technologies and energy use.

#### HSR construction creates massive emissions – offsets tradeoffs

Brenda Changa and Alissa Kendallb, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California Davis b Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and University of California Davis Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 16, Issue 6, August 2011, Pages 429–434, Life cycle greenhouse gas assessment of infrastructure construction for California’s high-speed rail system, August 2011.

This enormous public investment in HSR comes at the same time that California begins implementing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies to meet regulatory commitments for climate change mitigation. Both the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) (2008) estimate that the proposed HSR system will reduce GHG emissions by offsetting auto and air travel. CARB estimates the HSR system may reduce annual emissions by 1.15 million metric tons of CO2-equivalent (Mt CO2e). CHSRA is even more optimistic – proposing an estimated reduction of 3.08 Mt CO2e per year by 2030 (California High-Speed Rail Authority, 2008). However, not only do these emissions reduction estimates hinge on assumptions about ridership and the performance of the other passenger modes, neither considers the upfront emissions that would result from construction of HSR infrastructure. This study estimates construction-related GHG emissions of the HSR trackbed and its supporting infrastructure through a process-based life cycle assessment (LCA). Construction of trackbed, electrification infrastructure, cut-and-fill operations, aerial structures, and tunnels are all characterized. This analysis is the first to ever characterize life cycle emissions from tunnel construction for any type of infrastructure, and may serve as a source of information and data for future LCAs. The result of the LCA allows for comparison of emissions from investment in HSR infrastructure to changes in passenger transportation emissions due to HSR operation. Few studies have examined the potential impact of the HSR infrastructure development in the US. Chester and Horvath (2010) published the only study of the California HSR system that examines HSR construction and operation from a life cycle perspective. Their LCA characterized vehicle operation, vehicle non-operation, electricity production components, and infrastructure components, including construction, maintenance, and operation using a hybrid LCA approach. The hybrid LCA approach combines economic input–output methods and process-based methods. The construction components of their analysis include material and construction processes for aerial, cut-and-fill, and at-grade infrastructure segments and terrain-specific assessment for earthwork activities. Their study did not model tunneling processes or materials Chester and Horvath provide estimates of life cycle GHG emissions for the California HSR system on a per passenger-kilometer traveled (PKT) basis, and report a range from well under 100 g CO2e/PKT to over 700 g CO2e/PKT depending on ridership levels. Chester and Horvath’s finding that ridership levels were critical in determining the extent to which the California HSR system would reduce – or potentially even increase – GHG emissions compared to air and auto travel modes highlights the uncertainty of HSR use-phase emissions reductions.

### Extensions – HSR Causes Warming

#### Early emissions outweigh traffic c02 benefits – need 10’s of millions of annual trips to offset

Jonas Westina and Per Kågesona, a Centre for Transport Studies, Royal Institute of Technology b Department of Transport Science, Royal Institute of Technology. Both in Stockholm Sweden Can high speed rail offset its embedded emissions?, Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2012, Pages 1–7

4. Annual traffic required for offsetting embedded emissions Large CO2 emissions are generated from the construction and maintenance of a high speed link. In Network Rail (2009) the embedded greenhouse emissions from a high speed link are analyzed. Since the lifespan differs for different elements, the embedded emissions are annualized over the anticipated lifetime of each element. To calculate the embedded emissions there was also a need to consider the whole lifecycle including maintenance and the degree of material recycling when repairing the infrastructure. The embedded emissions are therefore expressed as CO2 equivalent emissions per rail-track km per year An important factor for the size of the embedded emissions is the proportion of tunnels versus open sections. Network Rail (2009) assume that the embedded emissions, for open sections, varies between 140 and 230 tonnes CO2 eq. per rail-track km per year depending on the type of track and recycling rate. For tunnel sections the embedded emissions varies between 880 and 980 tonnes CO2 eq. per rail-track km per year. Other studies on the embedded emissions from railway infrastructure come to somewhat different results depending on what factors they include in the analysis and what assumptions they make regarding the design, geographical location and depreciation period of the project ( [Claro, 2010] and [International Union of Railways, 2009]). The overall magnitude of the embedded emissions is however the same To study the overall effect on CO2 emissions from building a new high speed line, a reference project was used. The project is a 500 km long double track high speed line. Figures for the embedded emissions from the construction are taken from the central estimate in Network Rail (2009) with a recycling rate of 50% and assuming that 10% of the line is tunnels. The estimated annualized embedded emissions from constructing a 500 km long double track line is 118,000 tonnes of CO2-eq. Using the reference project, the required number of trips needed to compensate for the embedded emissions could be calculated. The simulated distribution of the required number of trips is shown in Fig. 2. The figure shows how many annual trips are needed to compensate for the embedded emissions from constructing and operating the new high-speed line, that is, when the emissions reduction, from the induced modal shift, is equal to the embedded emissions from constructing and operating the railway. When comparing the emissions reduction with the embedded emissions from constructing the new railway, the overall positive result in Fig. 1 changes. If the number of annual trips is below the required value, the reduced emissions from traffic diversion cannot compensate for the annualized embedded emissions from the construction. Even with a high diversion from aviation, on average nearly 10 million annual one-way trips are required to compensate for the annualized construction emissions – as indicated by the vertical line in the figure. For the other scenarios, the average number of required annual trips is even higher, between 15 and 20 million. The reference project consists of a relatively low proportion of tunnels. For a railway with a higher proportion of tunnels, even more trips would be required to compensate for the annual embedded emissions of the construction of the project.

#### C02 only decreases if there isn’t an increase in total traffic

Jonas Westina and Per Kågesona, a Centre for Transport Studies, Royal Institute of Technology b Department of Transport Science, Royal Institute of Technology. Both in Stockholm Sweden Can high speed rail offset its embedded emissions?, Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2012, Pages 1–7

In this analysis, the simulated emissions per passenger kilometer are applied to five different scenarios. Each scenario gives one example of how traffic generated by the investment in a new high speed line may be divided percentagewise on diverted traffic from other modes of transport, generated new traffic and pre-existing train passengers. Table 2 shows the assumptions made concerning how traffic is divided in the five scenarios.

From the figure it can be seen that on average all scenarios reduce total CO2 emissions. The effect is strongest with a high diversion from aviation. However, if the share of newly generated traffic is high, in combination with high emissions from marginal electricity production, there is a small risk that total CO2 emissions will increase instead of decrease. This highlights the importance of evaluating the share of newly generated traffic when estimating the environmental impact of investment in transport infrastructure. If the new line generates a large number of new trips, which would otherwise not take place, at least from a CO2 reduction perspective, the project may be unfavorable.

### Extensions – HSR Causes Warming

#### Infrastructure building causes warming

Brenda Changa and Alissa Kendallb, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California Davis b Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and University of California Davis Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 16, Issue 6, August 2011, Pages 429–434, Life cycle greenhouse gas assessment of infrastructure construction for California’s high-speed rail system, August 2011.

The contributions of material production, material transport and equipment for each infrastructure type are seen in Table 2. Production of construction materials contributes to more than 80% of emissions, transport of materials to the site approximately 16% of CO2e emissions and construction equipment operations only 5%. Construction of tunnels and aerial structure structures contributes nearly 60% of emissions, despite that these infrastructure types are only 15% of the infrastructure length. Sensitivity analysis shows that when aerial construction equipment emissions are varied from 0% to 100% of tunneling equipment emissions, GHG emissions change by only ±1.2%. To put construction emissions in context, we compare the time required to avoid the equivalent mass of emissions based on avoided emissions during HSR system operation. This calculation assumes that the HSR system will reduce vehicle kilometers travelled by other modes (namely roads and airplanes) that are more GHG intensive on a PKT basis, leading to 1.15 Mt CO2e avoided per annum as estimated by CARB. The calculations reflect only the direct reduction in vehicle emissions, not the reduction in maintenance or averted expansion of infrastructure other modes would experience if they were used less. Based on these assumptions, a simple recuperation calculation (2.4 Mt CO2e/1.15 Mt CO2e) results in slightly more than two years after HSR operation begins. This simple calculation, however, may distort the time needed to offset the climate change effect of emissions from construction. Recent studies suggest that the climate change effect of emissions that occur at the outset of a system’s life cycle are underestimated in traditional carbon accounting and LCA methods (Kendall et al., 2009). To address this shortcoming, we can assess a recuperation time based on global warming effect, rather than the mass of GHG emissions as estimated by CO2e For this recuperation time approach, global warming effect is modeled using cumulative radiative forcing (CRF). The IPCC uses CRF to calculate their widely applied global warming potentials and is an indicator of a GHG’s capacity to trap radiation over time. The recovery time calculated using CRF identifies the time when the global warming effect of the initial construction emissions are offset by the global warming effect of avoided use-phase emissions.

#### Prefer short term emission decreases

Jonas Westina and Per Kågesona, a Centre for Transport Studies, Royal Institute of Technology b Department of Transport Science, Royal Institute of Technology. Both in Stockholm Sweden Can high speed rail offset its embedded emissions?, Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2012, Pages 1–7

A different type of partial coverage is the fact that part of the high speed rail infrastructure, in particular tunnels, may have a lifespan substantially longer than 50 years. Thus, limiting the analysis to a depreciation period of 50 years may be unfair. On the other hand, the benefits of emissions reductions in the distant future may turn out to be much less important than those that take place in the near future, as the world is getting closer and closer to the point where the accumulated concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will exceed the point where it leads to an increase of the mean average temperature of more than 2 °C.

### Extensions – Minimal Benefit

#### Environmental benefits are small

Kenneth Button, George Mason University School of Public Policy 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

HSR has been supported by environmental arguments; a full train requires less fuel per passenger for a given distance than a car or plane. But most of the work has been very narrow, often not taking door-to-door effects into account or the environmental impacts of construction and land use changes. In addition, HSR is a spatially inflexible mode of transportation and if demand for its use is inadequate, its infrastructure leaves a large unused environmental footprint. Airports in contrast, involve little land take and services can easily be switched to other destinations. Taking these effects into account, even over the 400 km distances that HSR may provide a viable transportation service, its environmental benefits are at best, small.7 Additionally, the US freight rail network carries over 43%8 of the national tonne/miles done and, since 1980, its productivity has increased by over 172% and rates fallen by 55%. Some of the US HSR plans involve putting more passenger services onto this network that would inevitably result in some “intermodal” movements being switched to trucks with adverse environmental implications. While, one of the main arguments for HSR in Europe and Asia is to build dedicated track to separate passenger and freight traffic and free up capacity for the latter; this is not relevant in the US.

#### No environmental benefit to high-speed rail

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

2. Environmental Benefits. The environmental benefits of high-speed rail would be negligible at best. President Obama's moderate-speed trains are expected to be powered by diesel locomotives, which burn petroleum and emit pollutants and greenhouse gases. Even electrically powered, true high-speed rail is unlikely to be clean. California rated its proposal as environmentally sound only by projecting impossibly high ridership numbers and unrealistically assuming that future automobiles and airplanes would be no more energy-efficient than they are today. In 2005, Florida's High-Speed Rail Authority proposed a 125-mph rail line between Tampa and Orlando. The environmental impact statement for the proposal estimated that the trains would produce more nitrogen oxide pollution and volatile organic compounds than would be saved by the automobiles taken off the road.[35](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn35) It also calculated that operating and maintaining the gas-turbine locomotives would consume 3.5 to 6.0 times as much energy as would be saved by the cars replaced.[36](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn36) The statement concluded that "the environmentally preferred alternative is the No Build Alternative" because it "would result in less direct and indirect impact to the environment."[37](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn37) The Tampa-Orlando proposal was subsequently killed, only to be revived by the Obama administration. In January, the Department of Transportation announced that Florida will receive $1.25 billion of the $8 billion in high-speed rail stimulus funding for the route.[38](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn38)

### Extensions – Warming Inevitable

#### Warming advocates concede that past CO2 emissions is enough to trigger their impacts

IPCC 7 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report”, 12/12-17, p. 24-25)

Anthropogenic warming and sea level rise would continue for centuries due to the time scales associated with climate processes and feedbacks, even if GHG concentrations were to be stabilised. {WGI 10.4, 10.5, 10.7, SPM} If radiative forcing were to be stabilised, keeping all the radiative forcing agents constant at B1 or A1B levels in 2100, model experiments show that a further increase in global average temperature of about 0.5°C would still be expected by 2200. In addition, thermal expansion alone would lead to 0.3 to 0.8m of sea level rise by 2300 (relative to 1980-1999). Thermal expansion would continue for many centuries, due to the time required to transport heat into the deep ocean. {WGI 10.7, SPM}Contraction of the Greenland ice sheet is projected to continue to contribute to sea level rise after 2100. Current models suggest ice mass losses increase with temperature more rapidly than gains due to increased precipitation and that the surface mass balance becomes negative (net ice loss) at a global average warming (relative to pre-industrial values) in excess of 1.9 to 4.6°C. If such a negative surface mass balance were sustained for millennia, that would lead to virtually complete elimination of the Greenland ice sheet and a resulting contribution to sea level rise of about 7m. The corresponding future temperatures in Greenland (1.9 to 4.6°C global) are comparable to those inferred for the last interglacial period 125,000 years ago, when palaeoclimatic information suggests reductions of polar land ice extent and 4 to 6m of sea level rise. {WGI 6.4, 10.7, SPM} Dynamical processes related to ice flow – which are not included in current models but suggested by recent observations – could increase the vulnerability of the ice sheets to warming, increasing future sea level rise. Understanding of these processes is limited and there is no consensus on their magnitude. {WGI 4.6, 10.7, SPM} Current global model studies project that the Antarctic ice sheet will remain too cold for widespread surface melting and gain mass due to increased snowfall. However, net loss of ice mass could occur if dynamical ice discharge dominates the ice sheet mass balance. {WGI 10.7, SPM} Both past and future anthropogenic CO2 emissions will continue to contribute to warming and sea level rise for more than a millennium, due to the time scales required for the removal of this gas from the atmosphere. {WGI 7.3, 10.3, Figure 7.12, Figure 10.35, SPM}

#### Increased Chinese emissions prevent gains from any US cuts

Mark Lynas, Environmental Activist, Educational focus on Politics and History, 2007 “Six Degrees,” pg. 194

Because of its sheer size and population, China is on a collision course with the planet. The country’s oil use has doubled in the last ten years, and if the Chinese by 2030 use oil at the same rate as Americans do now, China will need 100 million barrels of oil a day. However, current world production is only around 80 million barrels per day, and is unlikely to rise much further before the “peak oil” point is reached. There simply isn’t enough oil in the ground to bring Chinese consumption up to Western levels—the global resource buffer is already being hit. Similarly for food: As the Chinese diet becomes increasingly rich in meat and diary products, more grain is needed. By 2030, if Chinese consumers are to become as voracious as Americans, they will use the equivalent of two-thirds of today’s entire global harvest. If Chinese car ownership were to reach current U.S. levels of three cars for every four people, China’s automobile fleet would number more than one billion by 2030, substantially more than the entire current world fleet of 800 million. In almost every sector of resource use, China’s ascension to Western consumption standards will clearly demand far more than the Earth can provide. Indeed, if every Chinese were to live like an American, it would double the human environmental impact on the planet, an impact that has already moved far beyond sustainable levels. Even forgetting about climate change, China’s get-rich-quick dream would quickly become a global nightmare.

### Extensions – No Warming

#### 7 reasons the global warming hypothesis is false – most qualified studies prove

CO2 Science Magazine, "Problems with Climate Models...and Bill Gates' Confidence in Them," December 8, 2010. http://www.co2science.org/articles/V13/N49/C1.php)

What was done

The author -- who is the Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Meteorology in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA), and who has long been critical of climate-alarmist claims of impending catastrophic CO2-induced global warming -- discusses (1) the ability of state-of-the-art global climate models to accurately simulate earth's climatic future and (2) the appropriateness of employing those simulations as justification for unprecedented actions to totally reformulate the energy base of the industrialized world in an attempt to drastically reduce anthropogenic CO2 emissions, which Bill Gates has said should be reduced to zero by the year 2050 in his 12 February 2010 Palm Springs TEDActive presentation (http://www.ted.com/talks/bill\_gates.html). What was lerned In statements summing up his evaluation of the pertinent science, Lindzen writes that (1) "the physics of unresolved phenomena such as clouds and other turbulent elements is not understood to the extent needed for incorporation into models," so that (2) models are presently merely "experimental tools whose relation to the real world is questionable," that (3) "current models depend heavily on undemonstrated positive feedback factors to predict high levels of warming," that (4) "there is compelling evidence for all the known feedback factors to actually be negative," that (5) "even supercomputers are inadequate to allow long-term integrations of the relevant equations at adequate spatial resolutions," that (6) "current models all predict that warmer climates will be accompanied by increasing humidity at all levels" but that "such behavior is an artifact of the models since they have neither the physics nor the numerical accuracy to deal with water vapor," and that (7) "the models' predictions for the past century incorrectly describe the pattern of warming and greatly overestimate its magnitude." In this regard, Lindzen further states that a doubling of the air's present CO2 content might lead to a warming of only "0.5 to 1.2 degrees centigrade," which is in harmony with the earlier analyses of Idso (1998), who employed a total of eight separate and independent "natural experiments" to demonstrate that in the real world, "a 300 to 600 ppm doubling of the atmosphere's CO2 concentration" -- which is somewhat less than the doubling of the air's current CO2 concentration referred to by Lindzen -- "could raise the planet's mean surface air temperature by only about 0.4°C." What it means Lindzen concludes that "with poor and uncertain models in wide use, predictions of ominous situations are virtually inevitable -- regardless of reality," and, therefore, he says that "it goes almost without saying that the dangers and costs of those economic and social consequences [of doing what the world's climate alarmists want everyone to do] may be far greater than the original environmental danger."

#### CO2 isn’t key, warming isn’t caused by humans, and historical data prove there is no impact.

Deaver 10 (John, “Deaver: Cap and Trade Bill not the answer to global warming,” The Times Herald, http://www.thetimesherald.com/article/20100810/OPINION02/8100310/Deaver-Cap-and-Trade-bill-not-the-answer-to-global-warming)

Wait a minute! While it is true that there is general agreement that there is a greenhouse gas effect, there is no agreement about the importance of CO2, which is a tiny fraction of such gases. Here are some facts that should tell us to be cautious about introducing costly economic measures that might not do anything to alleviate the situation.

First, there is no scientific proof that global warming is caused by CO2. There is only knowledge that over the past 150 years CO2 emissions generally and very roughly correspond to rising global temperatures. Second, during the Middle Ages--from about the years 1000 to 1300--an abundance of evidence reveals a period of warming that probably exceeded that of the present period. Greenland was green then. Yet there was no industrial revolution to cause it, and no evidence of any corresponding increase in CO2 from other sources. Third, there is a growing body of evidence, mainly from Arctic and Antarctic ice cores, that reveal long-term temperature cycles associated with variations in the sun's radiation that could explain the recent warming. The main point is scientists do not have positive evidence either about future climate trends or the fundamental causes of climate change. This suggests government programs such as Cap-and-Trade to deal with CO2 emissions, while imposing huge costs in terms of jobs and slower economic growth, could fail to have any impact on global warming.

### AT: Congestion

#### HSR doesn’t end traffic congestion – adds cars at problem locations

Kenneth Button, George Mason University School of Public Policy 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

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.

### AT: IPCC Good

#### IPCC has been undermined by recent errors

Steven Hayward, Weyerhaeuser fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “In Denial,” The Weekly Standard, March 15, 2010. http://www.weeklystandard.com/print/articles/denial)

The U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), hitherto the gold standard in climate science, is under fire for shoddy work and facing calls for a serious shakeup. The U.S. Climate Action Partnership, the self-serving coalition of environmentalists and big business hoping to create a carbon cartel, is falling apart in the wake of the collapse of any prospect of enacting cap and trade in Congress. Meanwhile, the climate campaign’s fallback plan to have the EPA regulate greenhouse gas emissions through the cumbersome Clean Air Act is generating bipartisan opposition. The British media—even the left-leaning, climate alarmists of the Guardian and BBC—are turning on the climate campaign with a vengeance. The somnolent American media, which have done as poor a job reporting about climate change as they did on John Edwards, have largely averted their gaze from the inconvenient meltdown of the climate campaign, but the rock solid edifice in the newsrooms is cracking. Al Gore was conspicuously missing in action before surfacing with a long article in the New York Times on February 28, reiterating his familiar parade of horribles: The sea level will rise! Monster storms! Climate refugees in the hundreds of millions! Political chaos the world over! It was the rhetorical equivalent of stamping his feet and saying “It is too so!” In a sign of how dramatic the reversal of fortune has been for the climate campaign, it is now James Inhofe, the leading climate skeptic in the Senate, who is eager to have Gore testify before Congress. The body blows to the climate campaign did not end with the Climategate emails. The IPCC—which has produced four omnibus assessments of climate science since 1992—has issued several embarrassing retractions from its most recent 2007 report, starting with the claim that Himalayan glaciers were in danger of melting as soon as 2035. That such an outlandish claim would be so readily accepted is a sign of the credulity of the climate campaign and the media: Even if extreme global warming occurred over the next century, the one genuine scientific study available estimated that the huge ice fields of the Himalayas would take more than 300 years to melt—a prediction any beginning chemistry student could confirm with a calculator. (The actual evidence is mixed: Some Himalayan glaciers are currently expanding.) The source for the melt-by-2035 claim turned out to be not a peer-reviewed scientific assessment, but a report from an advocacy group, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which in turn lifted the figure from a popular magazine article in India whose author later disavowed his offhand speculation. But what made this first retraction noteworthy was the way in which it underscored the thuggishness of the climate establishment. The IPCC’s chairman, Rajendra Pachauri (an economist and former railroad engineer who is routinely described as a “climate scientist”), initially said that critics of the Himalayan glacier melt prediction were engaging in “voodoo science,” though it later turned out that Pachauri had been informed of the error in early December—in advance of the U.N.’s climate change conference in Copenhagen—but failed to disclose it. He’s invoking the Charlie Rangel defense: It was my staff’s fault. The Himalayan retraction has touched off a cascade of further retractions and corrections, though the IPCC and other organs of climate alarmism are issuing their corrections sotto voce, hoping the media won’t take notice. The IPCC’s assessment that 40 percent of the Amazonian rain forest was at risk of destruction from climate change was also revealed to be without scientific foundation; the WWF was again the source. The Daily Telegraph identified 20 more claims of ruin in the IPCC’s 2007 report that are based on reports from advocacy groups such as Greenpeace rather than peer-reviewed research, including claims that African agricultural production would be cut in half, estimates of coral reef degradation, and the scale of glacier melt in the Alps and the Andes. Numerous other claims were sourced to unpublished student papers and dissertations, or to misstated or distorted research. Peer reviewers in the formal IPCC process had flagged many of these errors and distortions during the writing of the 2007 report but were ignored. For example, the IPCC claimed that the world is experiencing rapidly rising costs due to extreme weather related events brought on by climate change. But the underlying paper, when finally published in 2008, expressly contradicted this, saying, “We find insufficient evidence to claim a statistical relationship between global temperature increase and catastrophe losses.” Perhaps the most embarrassing walkback was the claim that 55 percent of the Netherlands was below sea level, and therefore gravely threatened by rising sea levels. The correct number is 26 percent, which Dutch scientists say they tried to tell the IPCC before the 2007 report was published, to no avail. And in any case, a paper published last year in Nature Geoscience predicting a 21st-century sea level rise of up to 32 inches has been withdrawn, with the authors acknowledging mistaken methodology and admitting “we can no longer draw firm conclusions regarding 21st century sea level rise from this study without further work.” The IPCC ignored several published studies casting doubt on its sea level rise estimates.

### AT: Idso biased

#### The Idso’s are highly qualified

Dennis Avery, Agriculture Analyst for US Department Of State, 7-24-2004, “Will global warming bring mass species extinction?,” July 24, http://www.cgfi.org/materials/articles/2003/sept\_14\_03.htm

“The Specter of Species Extinction” report was done by a father-and-sons research team, led by climate physicist Dr. Sherwood Idso and his PhD sons, Craig (a specialist in climate geography) and Keith (a botanist who studies how plants respond to C02 changes). Dr. Sherwood Idso, formerly of the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory in Phoenix, AZ, was a winner of the U.S. governments prestigious Arthur S. Flemming research award in 1977, and has published more than 500 articles in peer-reviewed publications. Dr. Craig Idso studied urban C02 concentrations under a National Science Foundation Grant to Arizona State’s Office of Climatology. Dr. Keith Idso is a member of the Arizona Advisory Council on Environmental Education. All are on the staff of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change in Tempe, AZ.

### AT: War

#### There is very little evidence that climate change results in more conflict: Many examples disprove.

Idean Salehyan Assistant professor of political science at the University of North Texas, “The New Myth About Climate Change: Corrupt, tyrannical governments-not changes in the Earth’s climate-will be to blame for the coming resource wars”, August 2007. <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3922>, Accessed 6/28/08

First, aside from a few anecdotes, there is little systematic empirical evidence that resource scarcity and changing environmental conditions lead to conflict. In fact, several studies have shown that an abundance of natural resources is more likely to contribute to conflict. Moreover, even as the planet has warmed, the number of civil wars and insurgencies has decreased dramatically. Data collected by researchers at Uppsala University and the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo shows a steep decline in the number of armed conflicts around the world. Between 1989 and 2002, some 100 armed conflicts came to an end, including the wars in Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Cambodia. If global warming causes conflict, we should not be witnessing this downward trend.

Furthermore, if famine and drought led to the crisis in Darfur, why have scores of environmental catastrophes failed to set off armed conflict elsewhere? For instance, the U.N. World Food Programme warns that 5 million people in Malawi have been experiencing chronic food shortages for several years. But famine-wracked Malawi has yet to experience a major civil war. Similarly, the Asian tsunami in 2004 killed hundreds of thousands of people, generated millions of environmental refugees, and led to severe shortages of shelter, food, clean water, and electricity. Yet the tsunami, one of the most extreme catastrophes in recent history, did not lead to an outbreak of resource wars. Clearly then, there is much more to armed conflict than resource scarcity and natural disasters.

Creating conflict through climate change ignores the ways in which conflicts have reduced in response to a lack of resources.

Betsy Hartmann “War Talk and Climate Change”, November 26, 2007. http://www.truthout.org/article/betsy-hartmann-war-talk-and-climate-change, Accessed 6/28/08)

These climate scare stories ignore the ways many poorly resourced communities manage their affairs without recourse to violence. Violent conflict in the Global South is generally more connected to resource abundance (competition over rich mineral reserves in the Congo or diamonds in Sierra Leone) than resource scarcity. Moreover, people and nations are as capable of cooperating as they are prone to fighting. The 1990s specter of violent water wars never materialized because of diplomacy and water-sharing agreements. Despite grandiose claims that hundreds of millions of 'climate refugees' will roam the planet, we simply don't know how many people global warming will displace. So much will depend on how effectively the international community rises to the challenge of reducing poor people's vulnerability to drought, storms, floods and sea-level rise, and implements strong disaster-response strategies.

### AT: Biodiversity

#### We control terminal uniqueness – two decade nasa study confirms that global biodiversity is up 6.2% (primarily because of increase in co2).

Lawrence Solomon, In Praise of CO2, Financial Post, Don Mills, June 7, 2008. http://wattsupwiththat.com/2008/06/08/surprise-earths-biosphere-is-booming-co2-the-cause/

The results surprised Steven Running of the University of Montana and Ramakrishna Nemani of NASA, **scientists** [**involved in analyzing the NASA satellite data**](http://modis.cn/pubs/PERS_2007_Liang.pdf). They **found that over a period of almost two decades, the Earth as a whole became more bountiful by a whopping 6.2%**. **About 25% of the Earth’s vegetated landmass** — almost 110 million square kilometres — **enjoyed significant increases and only 7% showed significant declines**. When the satellite data zooms in, it finds that each square metre of land, on average, now produces almost 500 grams of greenery per year. **Why the increase**? **Their** [2004 **study**](http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/300/5625/1560), **and** other **more** **recent** **ones**, **point to the** warming of the planet and the **presence of CO2**, a gas **indispensable to plant life**. **CO2 is nature’s fertilizer, bathing the biota with its life-giving nutrients. Plants take the carbon from CO2 to bulk themselves up** — carbon is the building block of life — **and release the oxygen, which along with the plants, then sustain animal life**. As summarized in a report last month, released along with a petition signed by 32,000 U. S. scientists who vouched for the benefits of CO2: “Higher CO2 enables plants to grow faster and larger and to live in drier climates. **Plants provide food for animals, which are thereby also enhanced**. The extent and diversity of plant and animal life have both increased substantially during the past half-century.”

### AT: Species Loss

#### Species can adapt to climate change

S. Fred Singer, Atmospheric Physicist at George Mason University and Founder of the Environmental Policy Project, and Dennis T. Avery, Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University and University of Wisconsin and former agricultural analyst for the US Department of State, 2007 “Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1,500 years,” p. 16

We know that species can adapt to abrupt global warming because the climate shifts in the 1,500-year cycle have often been abrupt. Moreover, the world's species have already survived at least six hundred such warmings and cooling’s in the past million years. The major effect of global warming will be more biodiversity in our forests, as most trees, plants, birds, and animals extend their ranges. This is already happening. Some biologists claim that a further warming of 0.8 degrees Celsius will destroy thousands of species. However, the Earth warmed much more than that during the Holocene Climate Optimum, which occurred 8,000 to 5,000 years ago, and no known species were driven extinct by the temperature increase.

### AT: Oceans

#### Ocean species are resilient to ocean acidification.

CO2 Science, Marine Ecosystem Response to "Ocean Acidification" Due to Atmospheric CO2 Enrichment, Vogt, M., Steinke, M., Turner, S., Paulino, A., Meyerhofer, M., Riebesell, U., LeQuere, C. and Liss, P.. Dynamics of dimethylsulphoniopropionate and dimethylsulphide under different CO2 concentrations during a mesocosm experiment. Biogeosciences 5: 407-419, JULY 16TH 2008. http://www.co2science.org/articles/V11/N29/B2.php

Vogt et al. report that **they detected no significant phytoplankton species shifts between treatments, and that "the ecosystem composition, bacterial and phytoplankton abundances and productivity, grazing rates and total grazer abundance and reproduction were not significantly affected by CO2 induced effects**," citing in support of this statement the work of Riebesell et al. (2007), Riebesell et al. (2008), Egge et al. (2007), Paulino et al. (2007), Larsen et al. (2007), Suffrian et al. (2008) and Carotenuto et al. (2007). In addition, they say that "while DMS stayed elevated in the treatments with elevated CO2, we observed a steep decline in DMS concentration in the treatment with low CO2," i.e., the ambient CO2 treatment. What it means With respect to their many findings, the eight researchers say their observations suggest that "**the system under study was surprisingly resilient to abrupt and large pH changes**," **which is just the opposite of** what the world's climate alarmists characteristically predict about **CO2-induced** "**ocean acidification**." And that may be why Vogt et al. described **the marine ecosystem they studied as "surprisingly resilient" to such change**: it may have been a little unexpected.

#### It’ll take more than 300 years for co2 levels to rise high enough to negatively impact marine ecosystems.

CO2 Science, The Fate of Fish in a High-CO2 World, Ishimatsu, A., Hayashi, M., Lee, K.-S., Kikkawa, T. and Kita, J. 2005. Physiological effects of fishes in a high-CO2 world. Journal of Geophysical Research 110: 10.1029/2004JC002564, OCTOBER 19TH 2005. http://www.co2science.org/articles/V8/N42/B3.php

Although this conclusion sounds dire indeed, it represents an egregious flight of the imagination in terms of what could realistically be expected to happen anytime in earth's future. Ishimatsu et al. report, for example, that "**predicted future CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere are lower than the known lethal concentrations for fish**," noting that "the expected peak value is about 1.4 torr [just under 1850 ppm] around the year 2300 according to Caldeira and Wickett (2003)." So just how far below the lethal CO2 concentration for fish is 1.4 torr? **In the case of** short-term **exposures on the order of a few days, the authors cite a number of studies that yield median lethal concentrations ranging from 37 to 50 torr, which values are** 26 and 36 times greater than the maximum CO2 concentration expected some 300 years from now!

### AT: Economy

#### Economists overestimated the impact of warming – only a small portion of the GDP is affected

Washington Post, 10-31-2006 , “Warming Called Threat To Global Economy,” http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/30/AR2006103000269.html

Some economists questioned the British study's projections, however, saying they overestimated the impact of global warming on the world's economies, especially those of developed nations. At the same time, these critics said the report's assertion that it would cost only 1 percent annually of global GDP to curb climate change underestimated how much spending would be required. "There's just a very small part of GDP" in industrialized nations "that's affected by weather in a direct or indirect way," said Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, which accepts some contributions from fossil-fuel companies. "It's very difficult to sketch out this disaster scenario." Yale University economics professor William Nordhaus, who has estimated that climate change will cost developed countries less than 1 percent of GDP over the next half-century, said the Stern report "appears to be an impressive effort to summarize the science and economics of climate change" despite the controversy surrounding its projections.

# \*\*AT: Oil Dependency Advantage

### 1NC AT: Oil Dependence

#### [1.] Energy efficiency benefits assume airlines and autos wont become more efficient thus reducing dependence on foreign oil

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](http://www.cato.org/) and author of [The Best-Laid Plans:How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future.](http://www.cato.org/store/index.asp?fa=ProductDetails&method=cats&scid=43&pid=1441366) “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

3. Automobile and Airplane Assumptions. In considering the costs and benefits of high-speed rail, fast trains should be compared not to today's cars and planes, but to tomorrow's more efficient cars and planes. If automakers are able to meet the administration's latest fuel-economy targets, and consumers continue to replace the nation's auto fleet at the usual rate, cars and light trucks on the road in 2020 will be almost 25 percent more energy efficient than they are today, on average, and by 2030 they will be 38 percent more fuel-efficient.  Meanwhile, the energy efficiency of air travel has increased an average 2 percent per year since 1980.[39](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn39) Boeing promises that its 787 plane will be 20 percent more fuel efficient than comparable planes today.[40](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn40) Jet engine makers have set a goal of doubling fuel efficiency by 2020.[41](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn41) The California high-speed rail authority claims that high-speed trains will produce large energy savings.[42](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn42) Yet the authority's own environmental impact statement (EIS) reveals that the benefits will be negligible. The EIS projects that the energy savings from operating high-speed rail will repay the energy cost of construction in just five years.[43](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn43) But the EIS assumes that the energy efficiency of autos and planes won't improve.[44](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn44) But if, over the lifetime of a high-speed rail project, autos and planes become 30 percent more fuel efficient, then the energy payback period for high-speed rail rises to 30 years. Since rail lines require expensive (and energy-intensive) reconstruction about every 30 years, high-speed rail is not likely to save energy at all. Steven Polzin, of the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research, points out that automobiles and buses have relatively short life cycles, so they can readily adapt to the need to save energy or reduce pollution. By contrast, he says rail systems "may be far more difficult or expensive to upgrade to newer, more efficient technologies."[45](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn45) The American auto fleet completely turns over every 18 years, and the airline fleet turns over every 21 years, so both can quickly become more fuel-efficient. With rail lines, however, we are stuck for at least three to four decades with whatever technology is selected.

#### [2.] Oil independence is impossible

National Petroleum Council, Samuel W. Bodman - US Secretary of Energy, Lee Raymond, Andrew Gould, John Hamre, David O’Reilly, Daniel Yergin, “Hard Truths” 2007. <http://downloadcenter.ConnectLive.com/events/npc071807/pdf> downloads/Final\_Report/NPC\_Facing\_Hard\_Truths.pdf

U.S. and global energy security depend upon reliable, sufﬁcient energy supplies freely traded among nations. This dependence will rise with the growth required in international oil and natural gas trade, and may be increasingly inﬂuenced by political goals and tensions. These trends are prompting renewed concerns about U.S. energy security. These energy security concerns have spurred calls for the United States to become totally self-sufficient in energy supply, often referred to as “energy independence.” This concept is unrealistic in the foreseeable future and incompatible with broader foreign policy objectives and treaty obligations. Policies espousing “energy independence” may create considerable uncertainty among international trading partners and hinder investment in international energy supply development.9 It is a hard truth that energy independence is not necessary for energy security. Rather than pursuing energy independence, the United States should enhance its energy security by moderating demand, expanding and diversifying domestic energy supplies, and strengthening global energy trade and investment. Indeed, even if the United States could become physically self-sufﬁcient in energy, it could not disengage from global energy activity, trade, and ﬁnance. There can be no U.S. energy security without global energy security.

### 1NC AT: Oil Dependence

#### [3.] Predictions of oil shocks are propagandistic doomsaying

Stephen Moore, director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute, March 17, 1999, “Low Oil Prices: A Fill Up of Good News,” <http://www.cato.org/dailys/03-17-99.html>

First, apocalyptic predictions from academics, government officials and the media should always be treated with a healthy dose of skepticism. Many of the doomsayers who predicted $100 a barrel oilin 2000are the same people who falsely predicted nuclear winter, massive famine across the globe, cities so polluted that gas masks would be required and other crises of biblical proportions. And these are the same pessimists who somehow have concluded that low oil prices are the problem. Just remember these Chicken Littles have a perfect record: they have been wrong every time.

#### [4.] New technology and discoveries will solve peak oil

Paul Roberts, expert on the interplay of economics, technology, and the environment Graudate of Univ Washington, Written many articles: NYT, New Republic, Harper’s on environmental issues, finalist for national magazine award 99, The End of Oil: on the edge of a perilous new world, pg 54-6. 2004.

But as in times past, depletion anxiety was quickly replaced by a surge of oil optimism. In 1975, spurred on by the high prices caused by the Arab oil embargo, oil companies began producing enormous volumes of oil from the North Sea, a deep-sea frontier previously dismissed as too techni- cally challenging to develop economically. Two years later, huge volumes began to flow from extensive fields on Alaska's equally inhospitable North Slope. Optimists say that these successes and the many more since highlight a major flaw in the pessimists' theory: namely, their failure to credit the oil industry for becoming much cleverer since the gloomy 1970s. Barred from access to "easy" Middle Eastern oil, oil companies were forced to reinvent how they looked for and produced oil, and the results have been aston- ishing. Drills today can now reach ten miles underground, move in any direction - even horizontally - and electronically detect oil and gas. Operators employ powerful supercomputers to create stunning three-dimensional seismic images of underground structures, showing precisely where oil- and gas-bearing rocks are and even identifying the best routes for drilling. For the industry, this explosion of technological advances has had three major effects. First, companies can now work in nearly any climate or environment, from permanently frozen tundra to a floating platform an- chored two miles above the ocean floor places previously dismissed as technically or economically impractical, like the Caspian or even frigid Si- beria, which is widely regarded as the "next" oil frontier. Thus, each year oil that was regarded as unreachable - or "unconventional" -becomes con- ventional. For example, new production technologies are even allowing oil companies to produce previously unusable oil, such as the molasseslike "heavy" oil of Venezuela and the massive reserves of tar sands in Alberta, Canada; indeed, the government of Alberta now claims to have "reserves" equivalent to more than a trillion barrels of oil. Second, companies have dramatically increased the amount of oil they get from a given field. As recently as the 19705, drillers were lucky to extract 30 percent of the oil from afield, while effectively leaving 70 percent in the ground as "unrecoverable?"2 Even today, in less-developed oil regions, like Saudi Arabia, recovery rates are said to average just 25 percent. But with new mapping and drilling technology, operators can see where the remaining oil lies within a reservoir, and then drop in a precisely targeted new well to reach it. Such techniques have raised recovery rates to as high as 8o percent a success that not only has boosted yields at new fields but is allowing companies to revive declining and even abandoned fields. Worldwide, according to the USGS, enhanced recovery technologies will add another seven hundred billion barrels of oil to the world's tally of remaining oil - and delay by years the peak in production. Dan Butler, an analyst at the Energy Information Agency, the very optimistic forecasting arm of the U.S. Energy Department, says some of the biggest potential for improving recovery is in the Middle East. "The Saudis have very primitive operations," says Butler. "They just let the oil gush out. But if you could get another ~ percent out of Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East, you would up your reserve base by at least a hundred billion barrels?' Third, companies are much smarter at knowing where to look for oil. New geological understandings - for example, that oil can form anywhere within dozens of miles of a river delta, even in superdeep waters – have led to a welter of new discoveries in unexpected places, like the deep waters off the coast of West Africa. Deep-water oil is touted as the real frontier of the future and is the place where most oil companies and many analysts expect to find the bulk of the undiscovered oil. Excitement is particularly keen over "deltaic" prospects in the deep-water Gulf of Mexico, off the coast of Africa and Brazil, as well as in the Arctic provinces of Canada and Greenland, Norway, and Siberia, where seismic surveys reveal subterranean structures identical to those beneath the oil-rich North Sea, but far larger. "The Arctic is going to be the next big play;' promises Tom Ahibrandt, the director of the USGS world assessment project and a prominent oil opti- mist. "We feel that more than half of all undiscovered resources are in the deep offshore, of which half are in the Arctic. And we've looked at only seven Arctic provinces; there are twenty-eight more we need to look at. We haven't even begun to discover all the oil that is out there."3 But even the USGS is not the last word in oil optimism. When U.S. policymakers want the most positive energy forecast, they turn to the U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA). Whereas USGS forecasts take into ac- count only oil that could be extracted with today's technology and at to- day's oil prices, the EIA assumes substantial improvements in both – with encouraging results. So, for example, while most optimists believe that the Caspian region might hold 100 billion barrels, EIA numbers show a stag- gering 292 billion barrels of "ultimately recoverable reserves" in Kazakh- stan, Azerbaijan, and other "-stans?' The ETA further believes that newly discovered fields off West Africa and South America may, when combined, come close to rivaling those of some Middle Eastern states. "It's probably not a new Saudi Arabia;' says EIXs Butler, smiling faintly, "but certainly enough to push the world production peak to 2035.

### AT: Peak Oil

#### Peak oil theory is wrong – the world is not running out of oil, the world has plenty of reserves

David Green et al, Donald Jones and Paul Leiby, the Center for Transportation Analysis and both from The Energy and Global Change Analysis at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, May 11, 1995, “The Outlook for US Oil Dependence”, 1995. <http://pzl1.ed.ornl.gov/Ornl6873.pdf>

Although world petroleum resources are ultimately finite, the world is not imminently “running out of oil” (Gordon, 1994). At 1992 consumption rates, the 1.6 trillion barrels of ultimate resources would last 65 years. There are, in addition, vast unconventional oil resources in the form of extra heavy oils, tar sands, and oil shale. Extra heavy oil deposits in the Orinoco province of Venezuela and tar sands in Western Canada together are judged to be equivalent to 0.6 trillion barrels of crude oil, roughly the proved reserves of the entire Middle East. These two deposits alone would add another 25 years at current consumption rates. Difficulty of recovery and processing, and adverse environmental impacts will increase the cost of these resources, however. The problem is not one of “running out of oil,” it is rather a problem of the costs and environmental impacts of oil use.

### AT: Economy

#### Oil shocks don’t affect the economy and increased domestic supply wouldn’t solve anyway

Pietros Nivola, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, 2/11/2001, Los Angeles Times

Alas, this critique did not pause to ponder an obvious puzzle. In 1973, when this country imported little more than a third of the petroleum it consumed, why did the economy prove far more, not less, exposed to the shock of rising international oil prices than it did last year when those prices soared while our dependence on foreign oil reached an all-time high? Economic security is not a function of how much energy a nation produces domestically or buys from abroad. Britain, for instance, produces more oil than it needs. Yet Britain's self-sufficiency scarcely shielded British consumers from the sudden spike in gasoline prices last summer**.** The reason: Petroleum prices everywhere are set in a world market, and no country**,** even a net exporter, can readily repair to an energy policy that says, in effect, "Stop the world. I want to get off**."** More consequential for economic stability than the share of fuel supplied by foreign sources is a nation's level of energy consumption and susceptibility to inflationary pressures. TheUnited States todayis much more energy efficient than it was in1973. All things being equal, our economy now is roughly half as vulnerable to the effects of energy price increases**.** The economy is also far less inflation-prone than in the 1970s. Consequently, even the tripling of global crude-oil prices between 1998 and 2000 did little damage**.**

#### Oil shocks heal themselves without government interference

Jerry Taylor, director of natural resource studies at the Cato Institute and adjunct scholar at the Institute for Energy Research, and Peter VanDoren, editor of Regulation magazine, Journal of International Affairs, Fall 1999, p. 216

The 1990 Iraqi oil shock illustrates how oil markets behave if the government does nothing. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the world market suffered a shortfall of about 4.5 million barrels a day (bid) out of a total world supply of crude oil of approximately 61 million b/d. Prices jumped from $16 per barrel in June 1990 to $30 in September. The shortfall in supply in this case was about 7.4 percent. While prices increased by 85 percent, by the next year prices had returned to pre-shock levels. The Gulf War oil shock was not without economic consequences, but the effects were much less than the effects of the shocks of the l970s. This is particularly striking since the shortfall generated in 1990 was larger than those generated in 1973 or 1979 (3 percent and 6 percent respectively).22 The main difference was that the U.S. government did not create an elaborate price-control system to take away the profits that came from the sudden increase in value of inventories. Once owners realized that the price-control policies of the 1970s would not be reenacted, they sold inventory to the market and made money from the 85 percent price hike. The marketplace worked efficiently and both producers and consumers were thus better off than they had been when government encumbered the forces of supply and demand in the 1970s.

### AT: Hegemony

#### Oil independence doesn’t solve US national security issues

Frank Verrastro, director of and a senior fellow in the CSIS Energy and National Security Program., Autumn 2007. Providing Energy Security in an Interdependent World. The Washington Quarterly. <http://www.twq.com/07autumn/docs/07autumn_verrastro.pdf>. 30:4 pp. 95

Further, the notion that simply reducing the United States’ oil import de­pendence would significantly enhance U.S. foreign policy options is also mis­guided and potentially damaging to many existing relationships. Even if the United States were energy self-sufficient, as long as its allies remained import dependent it might well have less leverage diplomatically, as the world could become more factionalized. The mutual dependence among consumer nations and between consumers and producers should be used as a means for finding common solutions to shared global energy problems, including environmental, security, and economic

#### US control of Gulf oil is critical to long term energy security and global hegemony –

Robert Dryfus April 2003. Mother Jones. http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2003/03/ma\_273\_01.html

As vital as the Persian Gulf is now, its strategic importance is likely to grow exponentially in the next 20 years. Nearly one out of every three barrels of oil reserves in the world lie under just two countries: Saudi Arabia (with 259 billion barrels of proven reserves) and Iraq (112 billion). Those figures may understate Iraq's largely unexplored reserves, which according to U.S. government estimates may hold as many as 432 billion barrels. With supplies in many other regions, especially the United States and the North Sea, nearly exhausted, oil from Saudi Arabia and Iraq is becoming ever more critical -- a fact duly noted in the administration's National Energy Policy, released in 2001 by a White House task force. By 2020, the Gulf will supply between 54 percent and 67 percent of the world's crude, the document said, making the region "vital to U.S. interests." According to G. Daniel Butler, an oil-markets analyst at the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Saudi Arabia's production capacity will rise from its current 9.4 million barrels a day to 22.1 million over the next 17 years. Iraq, which in 2002 produced a mere 2 million barrels a day, "could easily be a double-digit producer by 2020," says Butler.

#### Even if the US stopped importing oil for the ME we would still be just as vulnerable to supply disruptions and price volatility

Frank Verrastro, director of and a senior fellow in the CSIS Energy and National Security Program., Autumn 2007. Providing Energy Security in an Interdependent World. The Washington Quarterly. <http://www.twq.com/07autumn/docs/07autumn_verrastro.pdf>. 30:4 pp. 95

Energy independence arguments usually focus only on issues of supply se­curity without paying enough attention to supply logistics, trade flows, and economic and environmental considerations. It has again become fashionable of late, in reaction to higher energy prices and threats against unstable and in­secure supply lines, to resurrect the notion of energy independence as though achieving such status would lower the price of energy, reduce price volatility, bring about greater energy security, and rid the United States of all foreign policy constraints.

#### No political will for energy independence

Frank Verrastro, director of and a senior fellow in the CSIS Energy and National Security Program., Autumn 2007. Providing Energy Security in an Interdependent World. The Washington Quarterly. <http://www.twq.com/07autumn/docs/07autumn_verrastro.pdf>. 30:4 pp. 95

In the absence of decisive political will to undertake those steps necessary to improve efficiency, promote conservation, and encourage the development of domestic energy resources as well as renewable energy forms, learning to manage the risks accompanying import dependency may be the only reasonable course of action, at least for the foreseeable future. Although reducing U.S. im­port dependence will make us more secure, absent the reimposition of domestic price controls, the United States will still be subject to global oil price increases regardless of whether oil import dependence is at 20 percent or 60 percent.

### AT: Terrorism

#### Decreasing oil dependence encourages terrorist aggression

The Union Leader, 2/14/2002

Leftist critics of American involvement in the Middle East are urging the United States to raise federal fuel efficiency standards to reduce dependence on foreign oil. They claim that our purchasing of oil from that region is angering radical terrorists who would leave us alone if only we removed our presence and never again set foot on their sand-swept shores. Conservative critics of foreign oil dependency say the United States must discover and use additional domestic sources of oil because buying oil from Arabs indirectly funds Middle Eastern terrorist organizations. Once we have these new sources of oil, we can stop writing checks to Mohammed and let that region alone. Either way, the result is the same: Scared by the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States will have pulled out of the Middle East and turned inward. If this happens, the unavoidable conclusion that all Islamist jihad warriors will come to is that terrorism against the United States works. There is another answer, however. The United States does not have to turn tail and run. Instead, we could solve the problem. And dependence on oil from the Middle East is not the problem. The problem is the theocratic Middle Eastern regimes that control the oil and use Western dollars to fund terrorist organizations. This includes “friendly” countries like Saudi Arabia.

# \*\*AT: Economy Advantage

### 1NC AT: Economy Advantage

#### [1.] High-speed rail fails – costs greater than benefits, passengers wont use, and tradesoff with freight transport which is comparatively more important to US economy

Michael Lind, New America Foundation, “Goodbye, Bullet Trains and Windmills”, Salon, June, 8 2010

High-speed rail is the transportation technology of the future -- and always will be. The U.S. economy is in trouble. Disappointing employment growth figures show that mass unemployment may be with us for some time. The stimulus spending in the U.S. was far too small and depended too much on tax cuts. State budget crises that result primarily from the Wall Street-created global crash, not statehouse mistakes, may yet cripple the economy, as the effect of federal stimulus spending wears off. All of this strengthens the case for more government spending for years to come. After bailing out the states, the best use of federal dollars would be massive public investment in infrastructure that increases long-term U.S. economic growth. Like other capital improvements, infrastructure investment should be financed not by current taxes but rather by federal, state and local government or agency bonds. In the case of infrastructure assets that deliver benefits for generations, it makes sense to borrow in order to build them and to pay down the debt over decades. The faster the economy grows as a result of infrastructure investment, the less burdensome debt service will be. And we know from 200 years of experience that falling transportation costs and plummeting energy costs are among the major drivers of economic growth. Unlike most conservatives and libertarians, most progressives support large-scale public investment in transportation and energy infrastructure to prop up aggregate demand in the short run and enhance national productivity in the long run. They are right to do so. Unfortunately, the progressive movement in the U.S. tends to focus its advocacy on the wrong infrastructure projects. The center-left consensus favors massive government investment in an uneconomical form of transportation -- fixed-rail, in the form of light rail or high-speed intercity passenger rail -- and in uneconomical renewable energy sources: solar, wind and biomass. Why these particular infrastructures, rather than others? The answer is the fusion, in the last decade, of two previously distinct post-'60s activist movements on the left: urbanists, who despise suburbs, and Greens, who despise automobiles and airplanes. Many liberals have unthinkingly treated the goals of these single-issue movements as their own. But one can be a liberal in good standing -- by, for example, supporting a living wage, universal social insurance, and government-backed manufacturing policy -- and still reject the infrastructure agendas of urbanists and greens. High-speed rail is the transportation technology of the future -- and always will be. In his 1964 State of the Union address, President Lyndon Johnson called for a national system of high-speed trains. Nothing happened. Then in the 1970s President Jimmy Carter repeated the call. Nothing happened. Then in 2009, President Barack Obama dusted off a bizarre map from the Carter administration, which for some reason had a high-speed connection between Houston and New Orleans rather than Houston and other Texas cities, and proclaimed that this was his plan. Then something finally happened -- but not much. The federal government announced modest funding for relatively short high-speed rail routes that might, if they are ever built, get tourists to Las Vegas and Disneyworld slightly more rapidly than before. High-speed rail in America is perpetually discussed and never built. There are two explanations. One, known as the "Roger Rabbit" theory, after the conspiracy theory about the decline of mass transit found in the movie "Roger Rabbit," holds that a conspiracy of oil companies, automobile manufacturers and real estate interests took over the U.S. government around World War II and killed off trolleys and passenger trains. The less dramatic but real reason is that federal and state officials repeatedly have concluded that the costs of high-speed rail proposals outweigh the benefits. A train is a kind of expensive, pre-modern bus or truck caravan that can never change its route because it is fastened to the road. As nations grow more affluent, their people prefer the convenience of personal automobile transportation to the inflexibility of mass transit. [This chart](http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/kbenfield/natgeo_surveys_countries_trans.html)shows that the countries whose inhabitants rely the most on mass transit are poor ones -- Russia, China, Mexico. People in rich countries like Germany and Japan are much less likely than people in poor countries to use mass transit. Mass transit is used least by the inhabitants of the U.S., Canada and Australia, where low population densities make long-distance air and car travel more practical than passenger rail at any speed. The tiny minority of Americans who regularly use mass transit rely chiefly on buses, not rail. Despite all the subsidies showered on Amtrak, private, unsubsidized bus service from Washington to New York is far less expensive than train travel. One-third of the people in the U.S. who take mass transit every day, and two-thirds of those who commute by rail, [live in the New York metro area](http://www.mta.info/mta/network.htm). In the unlikely event that other metro areas in the remote future become as dense as the New York region, more fixed rail transit might become practical. Until then, those who favor mass transit should favor cheaper and more flexible bus rapid transit, even if buses are less glamorous than bullet trains. If fixed-rail mass transit is a transportation technology of the 19th century rather than of the 21st, what transportation investments make sense? The U.S. needs to reduce its imports and grow its exports by expanding its tradable goods sector. The emphasis should therefore be on lowering the costs of freight transportation, not on getting people out of cars and into trains. It is far more important to get goods from American factories, farms and mines to container ships bound for foreign consumers at lower cost than it is to cut five minutes off the daily commutes of office workers in New York and New Jersey. Focusing on freight infrastructure improvements means that, among other things, we need to build more highway lanes and in some cases new highways for the trucks that will continue to carry most freight. It also means paying for port expansion, freight rail modernization and upgrading our crucial but frequently ignored inland waterway system. And passenger travel? Unless the U.S. shuts down immigration, the U.S. population is likely to grow to 400-600 million by 2050. If anti-sprawl campaigners try to prevent the construction of new roads to accommodate a few hundred million more Americans, they will fail. In addition to building more roads for passenger use as well as freight transportation, we need to build more airports in the U.S. to relieve congestion. Asphalt destined for highway and airport expansion lacks the gee-whiz factor of high-speed bullet trains, but it is much more important to the future of our economy. And asphalt has unimpeachable liberal credentials. Although Dwight Eisenhower gets the credit, it was Franklin Roosevelt who planned and lobbied for the interstate highway system that many of today’s urbanists and environmentalists denounce.

### 1NC AT: Economy Advantage

#### [2.] Economic benefits are exaggerated

#### [a.] Studies prove

Kenneth Button, Prof George Mason University School of Public Policy, 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

Full economic analysis of the potential HSR in the US is relatively limited, and tends to be of a narrow economic impact kind, e.g. regarding Florida (Lynch, 2002) and California (Bay Area Council Economic Institute, 2008). Edward Glaeser has critiqued the case for HSR in the US, and in particular the costs and benefits of a link between Dallas and Houston9 that he estimates would entail a net social cost of about $490 million a year (Table 1).

Any ex ante economic analysis of HSR involves a high degree of uncertainty in forecasting (Brownestone et al., 2010). Some of the problems are of a purely technical kind in specifying underlying factors influencing costs and utilization, but there is often a significant degree of capture of predictions by those favoring a particular policy. This is highlighted by [Flyvbjerg et al., 2002] and [Flyvbjerg et al., 2010] who, looking at forecasting across a range of countries, found a tendency for over-prediction of capacity utilization and under-prediction of the outcome costs of investments, e.g. for ten rail projects examined, the passenger forecasts overestimated traffic by 106% while costs of 58 rail projects indicate overruns averaging nearly 45%; 40.8% for US projects.10

#### [b.] assumes ideal HSR

David M. Levison, Networks, Economics, and Urban Systems Research Group, University of Minnesota, Department of Civil Engineering, “Accessibility impacts of high-speedrail,” Journal of Transport Geography, Volume 22, May 2012, Pages 288–291. Special Section on Rail Transit Systems and High Speed Rail, 2012.

High-speedrail lines have been built and proposed in numerous countries throughout the world. The advantages of such lines are a higher quality of service than competing modes (air, bus, auto, conventional rail), potentially faster point-to-point times depending on specific locations, faster loading and unloading times, higher safety than some modes, and lower labor costs. The disadvantage primarily lies in higher fixed costs, potentially higher energy costs than some competing modes, and higher noise externalities. Whether the net benefits outweigh the net costs is an empirical question that awaits determination based on location specific factors, project costs, local demand, competition, and network effects (depending on what else in the network exists). The optimal network design problem is hard (in the mathematical sense of “hard”, meaning optimal solutions are hard to find because of the combinatoric possibilities of different network configurations), so heuristics and human judgment are used to design networks. The network architecture of high-speedrail lines has tended to be in a hub-and-spoke pattern, connecting a hub city (e.g. Paris, Madrid, Tokyo) to secondary cities in tree-like architecture. The networks have occasional crossing links, typically at both lower speed, lower frequency, and lower cost of construction than the mainline. As these systems were designed nationally, and the largest city is often the capital (as in Paris, Madrid, and Tokyo), which is also (roughly) centrally located, it is no surprise that the hub was based where it was. Germany has fewer very highspeed links (faster than 300 km/h), and a flatter (less-hubbed) network, perhaps reflecting its strong federalism, relative decentralization into a multi-polar urban structure and late formation into a nation-state. Italy has centered its hub in Milan, the largest metropolitan area in the country. The reason for the hub-and-spoke architecture is to achieve economies of density in track usage and network effects at the hub city which enable frequent service to multiple destinations. Multiple paths between origins and destinations would diffuse the network effects and result in less frequent service, and therefore reduce demand. The hub-and-spoke architecture, while benefitting the network as a whole when demand is insufficient to enable frequent point-to-point service, clearly serves the hub cities the most, as they gain from all the incoming flows which create additional demand, and thus greater service. In air transportation, airlines often use hub-and-spoke networks, and if they have a large market share at a hub airport, will use that advantage to charge a premium for travel, thereby capturing some, if not all, of the benefits consumers receive from being located in a hub airport city. 2. Hubs and spokes “The spatial impacts of the new lines will be complex. They will favour the large central cities they connect, especially their urban cores, and this may threaten the position of more peripheral cities.” (Hall, 2009) “[T]he wider economic benefits of high-speedrail are difficult to detect, as they are swamped by external factors”, but are likely to be larger in more central locations than more peripheral locations.” (Preston and Wall, 2008) As used here, a hub is a center of activity, from which multiple (at least three) spokes (links connecting the hub with other locations) emanate. On a network with a tree structure, the primary hub is the point from which the maximum number of spokes emerge. There may be secondary and tertiary hubs on the network as well. The proposed US Program (Upper Right of Fig. 1) has no well-thought out national architecture. There were a number of independent proposals that have been drawn on a single map. These can be thought of as hubs (metro area 2010 Census ranking in parentheses) based in New York (1), Los Angeles (2), Chicago (3), Dallas (4), Atlanta (9), Phoenix (14), Seattle (15), Denver (21), and Orlando (26).1 The Florida network (Orlando Hub) has been canceled by the Governor, though in transportation, nothing is permanently dead. The US High-speedRail Association network includes even more cities.

### 1NC AT: Economy Advantage

#### [3.] Economic declines don’t cause conflict

Thomas P.M Barnett, snr managing dir of Enterra Solutions LLC, editor/columnist for Esquire, “The New Rules: Security Remains Stable Amid Financial Crisis,” Aprodex, Asset Protection Index, 8/25/2009. <http://www.aprodex.com/the-new-rules--security-remains-stable-amid-financial-crisis-398-bl.aspx>

When the global financial crisis struck roughly a year ago, the blogosphere was ablaze with all sorts of scary predictions of, and commentary regarding, ensuing conflict and wars -- a rerun of the Great Depression leading to world war, as it were. Now, as global economic news brightens and recovery -- surprisingly led by China and emerging markets -- is the talk of the day, it's interesting to look back over the past year and realize how globalization's first truly worldwide recession has had virtually no impact whatsoever on the international security landscape. None of the more than three-dozen ongoing conflicts listed by GlobalSecurity.org can be clearly attributed to the global recession. Indeed, the last new entry (civil conflict between Hamas and Fatah in the Palestine) predates the economic crisis by a year, and three quarters of the chronic struggles began in the last century. Ditto for the 15 low-intensity conflicts listed by Wikipedia (where the latest entry is the Mexican "drug war" begun in 2006). Certainly, the Russia-Georgia conflict last August was specifically timed, but by most accounts the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics was the most important external trigger (followed by the U.S. presidential campaign) for that sudden spike in an almost two-decade long struggle between Georgia and its two breakaway regions. Looking over the various databases, then, we see a most familiar picture: the usual mix of civil conflicts, insurgencies, and liberation-themed terrorist movements. Besides the recent Russia-Georgia dust-up, the only two potential state-on-state wars (North v. South Korea, Israel v. Iran) are both tied to one side acquiring a nuclear weapon capacity -- a process wholly unrelated to global economic trends. And with the United States effectively tied down by its two ongoing major interventions (Iraq and Afghanistan-bleeding-into-Pakistan), our involvement elsewhere around the planet has been quite modest, both leading up to and following the onset of the economic crisis: e.g., the usual counter-drug efforts in Latin America, the usual military exercises with allies across Asia, mixing it up with pirates off Somalia's coast). Everywhere else we find serious instability we pretty much let it burn, occasionally pressing the Chinese -- unsuccessfully -- to do something. Our new Africa Command, for example, hasn't led us to anything beyond advising and training local forces.

### Extensions – HSR Hurts Economy

#### High-speed rail would be a financial catastrophe – small rail market, more expensive to subsidize than US highway upkeep, and infrastructure costs will exceed actual returns

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Learning from Europe’s Mistakes

Advocates for more spending on passenger rail, including HSR, often point to Europe and Japan as role models and aspirational goals for American policy. This Euro-envy manifests itself in the promotional statements of America’s rail hobbyists and the foreign companies that hope to sell billions of dollars of equipment, consulting, project management, and engineering services. For example, in an April 2009 press conference, President Obama played the envy card, arguing, “Now, all of you know this is not some fanciful, pie-in-the-sky vision of the future. It is now. It is happening right now. It has been happening for decades. The problem is that it’s been happening elsewhere, not here.” Obama went on to extol HSR systems in France, Spain, China, and Japan and concluded, “There’s no reason why we can’t do this. This is America. There’s no reason why the future of travel should lie somewhere else beyond our borders.”[[17]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn17) If one’s knowledge of European travel preferences comes from Time, The New York Review of Books, and Pink Panther movies, then the President’s statement would seem to ring true. Sadly, the reality is quite different. European and Asian governments have paid staggering sums to subsidize a mode of travel that only a small and shrinking share of their populations uses.[[18]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn18) In its most recent report on European travel patterns, the European Commission noted that passenger rail’s share of the European market (EU-27) declined from 6.6 percent in 1995 to 6.3 percent in 2008, reaching a low of 5.9 percent in 2004. Market shares for autos and buses also fell over the period, while the airlines’ market share jumped. In effect, Europeans are adopting more American modes of travel, despite massive taxpayer subsidies for rail. They are shifting their travel to unsubsidized, taxpaying airlines, which expanded their market share from 6.5 percent in 1995 to 8.6 percent in 2008. Indeed, by 2008, passenger rail’s share of the transportation market was the lowest of all modes, except travel by sea and motorcycles.[[19]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn19) Although the total size and scope of European subsidies for passenger rail are not known, a recent report by Amtrak’s Inspector General indicated that they are sizable and likely exceed what the U.S. government pays for highways. One purpose of the review was to address the contention that passenger rail in other countries, especially HSR, operates at a profit (that is, without subsidies). For 1995–2006, the study found that the governments of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Denmark, and Austria spent “a combined total of $42 billion annually on their national passenger railroads.”[[20]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn20) These six countries have a combined population of 269 million, and their expenditure of $42 billion on passenger rail in 2006[[21]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn21) is roughly proportional to the $54.8 billion that the government of the United States (population of 309 million) spent on all forms of transportation, including highways, rail, aviation, water transport, and mass transit.[[22]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn22) Data from individual countries reveal the financial catastrophes that the U.S. could confront if it embraces Euro-style passenger rail programs. According to the left-leaning The Economist, passenger rail subsidies reached $8.9 billion in 2008– 2009, and the magazine wondered: It is not clear why the public should be heavily subsidizing a mode of transport that accounts for a tiny minority of all travel: 8% of the total distance travelled in Britain during 2009, compared with 85% by cars and vans. The relatively few who use railways often are disproportionately well-off: three-fifths of the traffic is concentrated in the wealthy commuting counties of the south-east.[[23]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn23) Despite these massive subsidies, rail ticket prices are still comparatively high. At present, two people traveling from Heathrow airport to downtown London can hire a limousine that meets them at the baggage claim and takes them directly to their destination for less than the cost of taking the Heathrow Express to Paddington Station and then taking the Tube or a taxi to their final destination. Although the U.K. system is mostly low-speed rail, the nation’s one foray into HSR—the Channel Tunnel Link connecting London to Paris and Brussels—has been a costly experience. The infrastructure cost of connecting London’s St. Pancras station with Folkstone (a distance of 67 miles, including 15 miles of tunnels) at the Channel tunnel entrance totaled ₤6.9 billion ($11 billion), including $8.3 billion in loans and $2.7 billion in grants to the original private contractor that built and operated the line. That contractor has since relinquished its ownership of the line, and the U.K. government expects to sell it for $2.4 billion, for a potential loss of $8.6 billion.[[24]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn24) Meanwhile the signature Eurostar London–Paris– Brussels service that runs on the line has never exceeded half of what was projected in the project’s feasibility study.

### Extensions – Benefits Exaggerated

#### No economic benefit – numbers are exaggerated and poorly defended

Kenneth Button, Prof George Mason University School of Public Policy, 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

An underlying argument for the development of HSR is that, following Aschauer’s (1989) work, virtually any form of infrastructure investment generates a significant economic return. Winston (1991) and others, however, highlight the limitations of this, pointing to serious statistical problems of aggregation and specification bias in the empirical work that has been done. Aggregate data, however, does provide policy-makers with superficial arguments for investing especially when ex ante studies focus on the benefits of the investment with little discussion of the opportunity costs involved. But even at the micro-level there are a number of issues. Flyvbjerg et al. (2010) point to a number of factors influencing the situation. Informed debate requires full, or at least nearly, full and impartial information; asymmetric information can lead to strategic deception, a particular problem when there are divisions between principals and agents. In the case of HSR much of the planning and project appraisal is done at the local level, with at least part of the funding coming from central government. The problem is particularly acute if powerful individuals, groups, or coalitions, are in a position to use public moneys for essentially their own narrow interests; the “Bridge to Nowhere” situation; in the HSR case it is the lobbying of “gricers”, to use an English term, that is the problem.11

#### Economic Benefits of HSR exaggerated

Edward L. Glaeser, econ prof at Harvard, Is High-Speed Rail a Good Public Investment?, 2009. <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/28/is-high-speed-rail-a-good-public-investment/>

Yet the public must be wary every time our leaders decide to spend billions of our tax dollars

The Government Accountability Office’s comprehensive report on high-speed rail that reminds us that

While some U.S. corridors have characteristics that suggest economic viability, uncertainty associated with rider and cost estimations and the valuation of public benefits makes it difficult to make such determinations on individual proposals. Research on rider and cost has shown they are often optimistic and the extent that U.S. sponsors quantify and value public benefits vary.

The founders of transportation economics, like John Meyer and the deeply missed John Kain, found that the benefits of passenger rail rarely exceeded the costs.

Their views were caricatured by generations of Harvard graduate students as “Bus Good, Train Bad.” Is money really better spent on fast trains than on educating our children?

#### HSR doesn’t boost the economy – not a good form of Keynesian spending – needs imports

Kenneth Button, Prof George Mason University School of Public Policy, 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

HSR is not currently a commercial proposition except in very exceptional cases and the conditions that make for these exceptions hardly exist in the US. This does not mean that there should be no HSR investment, or that circumstances may not significantly change in some unforeseen way in the future, but it does suggest that investments should be carefully targeted and tailored to circumstances. It also means that throwing some arbitrarily determined aggregate sum of money at a hodgepodge of projects is unlikely to produce any major social return. The macro-economic justifications for public expenditure stimuli of the type seen from 2008 can be debated, but even if there is a case for it, there are good arguments in a world of international trade in spending the money on investments that yield a positive long-term national economic return.12 Simply stimulating an open economy by increasing public indebtedness inevitably pulls in imports, unless it more than proportionately enhances the economic efficiency of the nation’s economy. The Spanish idea that all major cities should be linked by HSR or the US’s idea that 80% of the population should have access to HSR, both concepts paying no regard to cost or demand, are arbitrary with no solid foundation in analysis, and as countries such as Spain have found out can have serious adverse consequences on employment and the well-being of future generations.

### Extensions – No Impact

#### History disproves the link between the economy and conflict

Niall Ferguson, Tisch Professor of History at Harvard, a Senior Research Fellow of Jesus College at Oxford, and a Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution “The War of the World”, Penguin Books, 2006. pg. xxxviii

Nor can economic crises explain all the violent upheavals of the century. As noted already, perhaps the most familiar causal chain in modern historiography leads from the Great Depression to the rise of fascism and the outbreak of war. Yet on closer inspection this pleasing story falls apart. Not all the countries affected by the Great Depression became fascist regimes; nor did all the fascist regimes engage in wars of aggression. Nazi Germany started the war in Europe, but only after its economy had recovered from the Depression. The Soviet Union, which started the war on Hitler’s side, was cut off from the world economic crisis, yet ended up mobilizing and losing more soldiers than any other combatant. For the century as a whole, no general rule is discernible. Some wars came after periods of growth; others were the causes rather than the consequence of economic crisis. And some severe economic crisis did not lead to wars. Certainly, it is now impossible to argue (thought Marxists long tried to) that the First World War was the result of a crisis of capitalism; on the contrary, it abruptly terminated a period of extraordinary global economic integration with relatively high growth and low inflation.

### AT: Development

#### HSR doesn’t solve – existing circumstances key

Petra Todorovich et al, Daniel Schned, and Robert Lane, director of America 2050, associate planner for America 2050 and senior fellow for urban design at Regional Plan Association and founding principal of Plan & Process LLP, “High-Speed Rail International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers”, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2011

Four European rail station case studies point to a variety of experiences with high-speed rail and development impacts. It is difficult to isolate and quantify the specific impacts of high-speed rail service alone because the most successful high-speed rail initiatives are part of larger urban redevelopment plans that include collateral investments and policies. However, it is clear that high-speed rail service in itself will not guarantee development around a station. Center-city locations generally are more advantageous than peripheral sites, but the case studies reveal the degree to which the benefits of high-speed rail in any given location are moderated by the existing physical and economic circumstances. These observations can guide corridor and station location decisions in the United States and other countries contemplating the introduction of high-speed rail systems.

### AT: Jobs

#### Jobs will go overseas

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Within the month, the Obama Administration proved the journalist’s speculation to be essentially correct, albeit without the puppies. On January 8, 2011, Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara visited Governor Scott and suggested that Japan would like to be a financial backer for up to 60 percent of Florida’s share in the system. Given the project’s estimated cost of $2.7 billion and the federal subsidy of $2.4 billion, the Japanese government appears to be committing itself to financing up to $210 million of the project’s cost. Three days later, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation announced that “it would extend loans to projects not only of developing economies but those of rich countries, as it prepares to finance the JR Tokai consortium’s bid for the $2.7 billion first phase (Orlando–Tampa) of the Florida high-speed rail project.”[[12]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn12) The JR Tokai consortium consists of 11 Japanese companies, including Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. In effect, the Obama HSR program is morphing into a jobs-for-Japan program. Early reports indicate that the Japanese financial contribution will be in the form of a loan that will need to be serviced either by the HSR system and its riders or by Florida taxpayers if the system does not make a profit, which only a tiny fraction of HSR systems do.[[13]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn13)

#### No correlation of growth – people just shift where they are working

David M. Levison, Networks, Economics, and Urban Systems Research Group, University of Minnesota, Department of Civil Engineering, “Accessibility impacts of high-speedrail,” Journal of Transport Geography, Volume 22, May 2012, Pages 288–291. Special Section on Rail Transit Systems and High Speed Rail, 2012.

Nakamura and Ueda (1989) (cited in Sands, 1993) finds three of the six prefectures in Japan with a Shinkansen station had higher population growth than the national average between 1980 and 1985, while no prefecture without the Shinkansen grew faster than the national average. Whether the causality is that the rail caused the growth or areas expected to grew attracted investment is unclear. Similar studies conducted of metropolitan growth find results that suggest that Shinkansen and growth are correlated (e.g. Hirota, 1984 reported in Brotchie, 1991), but again the causal structure is not clear. Recent studies suggest the effects of the newer Shinkansen lines are not as favorable as earlier lines (Nakagawa and Hatoko, 2007). Sands (1993) concludes the Shinkansen has shifted growth, but not induced it.

### AT: Tourism

#### Tourism is neutral – more likely to go home than stay overnight

David M. Levison, Networks, Economics, and Urban Systems Research Group, University of Minnesota, Department of Civil Engineering, “Accessibility impacts of high-speedrail,” Journal of Transport Geography, Volume 22, May 2012, Pages 288–291. Special Section on Rail Transit Systems and High Speed Rail, 2012.

Albalate and Bel (2010) report “Esteban Martı´n (1998) claims that cities served by HighSpeed Trains (HSTs) benefit from improved accessibility, but at the same time there is a downgrading of conventional train services and air services on those lines where a HST alternative exists. HSTs do not appear to attract advanced services companies, which show no greater propensity to locate in areas neighboring HST railway stations. And while business tourism and conferences benefit from HST services, a reduction in the number of overnight stays cuts tourist expenditure and the consumption of hotel services. Interestingly, while a HST line improves accessibility between the cities connected by the service, it disarticulates the space between these cities – what has been referred to as the tunnel effect (Gutiérrez Puebla and Garcı´a Palomares, 2005). Hence, HST lines do not seem to increase inter-territorial cohesion, but rather they promote territorial polarization”.

### AT: Competitiveness

#### HSR is a losing race – international experience shows it’s not cost-effective and World Bank reports show that ridership forecasts do not materialize

Washington Post, “A lost cause: The high-speed rail race”, 2/16/2011

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S [fiscal 2012 budget](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/14/AR2011021402446.html) includes $8 billion for high-speed rail next year and $53 billion over six years. In the president's view, the United States needs to spend big on high-speed rail so that we can catch up with Europe, Japan - and you-know-who. "China is building faster trains and newer airports," the president warned in his [State of the Union address](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address). But of all the reasons to build high-speed rail in the United States, keeping up with the international Joneses may be one of the worst. In fact, experience abroad has repeatedly raised questions about the cost-effectiveness of high-speed rail. China would seem to be an especially dubious role model, given the problems its high-speed rail system has been going through of late. [Beijing just fired its railway minister](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/12/AR2011021204496.html) amid corruption allegations; this is the sort of thing that can happen when a government suddenly starts throwing $100 billion at a gargantuan public works project, as China did with rail in 2008. Sleek as they may be, China's new fast trains are [too expensive for ordinary workers](http://www.cnn.com/2011/TRAVEL/01/27/china.new.year.transport/index.html) to ride, so they are not achieving their ostensible goal of moving passengers from the roads to the rails. Last year, the Chinese Academy of Sciences asked the government to reconsider its high-speed rail plans because of the system's huge debts. Of course, if the Chinese do finish their system, it is likely to require operating subsidies for many years - possibly forever. A recent [World Bank report](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/07/26/000334955_20100726032714/Rendered/PDF/558560WP0Box341SR1v08121jul101final.pdf) on high-speed rail systems around the world noted that ridership forecasts rarely materialize and warned that "governments contemplating the benefits of a new high-speed railway, whether procured by public or private or combined public-private project structures, should also contemplate the near-certainty of copious and continuing budget support for the debt." That's certainly what happened in Japan, where only a single bullet-train line, between Japan and Osaka, breaks even; it's what happened in France, where only the Paris-Lyon line is in the black. Taiwan tried a privately financed system, but it ended up losing so much money that the government had to bail it out in 2009. When it comes to high-speed rail, Europe, Japan and Taiwan have two natural advantages over every region of the United States, with the possible exception of the Northeast Corridor - high gas taxes and high population density. If high-speed rail turned into a money pit under relatively favorable circumstances, imagine the subsidies it would require here. Every dollar spent to subsidize high-speed rail is a dollar that cannot be spent modernizing highways, expanding the freight rail system or creating private-sector jobs. The Obama administration insists we dare not lag the rest of the world in high-speed rail. Actually, this is a race everyone loses.

#### Maglev or bust – China and Japan are too far ahead

Will Oremus, “Requiem for a Train: High-speed rail is dead in America. Should we mourn it?”, Salon, December 7, 2011

If there’s a silver lining to high-speed rail’s spectacular failure, it’s that these trains were outdated years ago. Even if all went according to the Obama administration’s plans, the nation’s rail network would have remained meager and backward by comparison to those in Japan and China. Those countries are already building [trains that run via magnetic levitation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maglev). Suspended a few inches above a guideway, maglev trains fly through the air at speeds greater than 300 mph, with minimal wear and tear. At this point in their development, maglev tracks are dauntingly expensive to build. But those costs might well come down by the time America is ready to get serious about its transportation infrastructure. At this rate, there seems to be plenty of time.

### AT: Interstate Highway 2.0

#### It’s not like the Interstate Highway investment

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

When President Obama announced his vision for high-speed rail in the United States, the White House stated that the plan “mirrors that of President Eisenhower, the father of the Interstate Highway System, which revolutionized the way Americans traveled.”1 A former Federal Railroad Administration official called the plan “Interstate 2.0.”2 Yet there are several crucial differences between high-speed rail and the Interstate Highway System. Most importantly, before Congress approved the legislation that created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, it had a good idea of how much the roads would cost, how the country would pay for them, and who they would serve. In contrast, neither President Obama nor the FRA have ever offered any estimates of how much their high-speed rail plan would cost, how it would be financed, or who would ride the trains. A close look at the data reveal that highspeed rail would not be a revolution but more of a counterrevolution: a step backwards to a time when only the wealthy had mobility and when low- and middle-class people worked hard to keep the wealthy mobile. For the mobility and other benefits it would produce, highspeed rail would be many times more expensive than the interstates. And while the vast majority of Americans use the interstates, use of highspeed rail would be confined to a few elites.

# \*\*AT: Addons

### AT: Soil Erosion Addon

#### Massive land use required

Kamaal R. Zaidi, BSc from the University of Calgary & J.D. from the University of Tulsa ARTICLE: High Speed Rail Transit: Developing the Case for Alternative Transportation Schemes in the Context of Innovative and Sustainable Global Transportation Law and Policy, Temple Journal of Science, Technology & Environmental Law, Fall, 2007, 26 Temp. J. Sci. Tech. & Envtl. L. 301

The most notable disadvantages of high-speed rail transit are its effects on communities, particularly the need for more land and the high construction costs of building new lines. n42 In building a new high-speed line, planners must negotiate around natural geographical barriers such as mountains, hard rocks, existing urban and rural communities, and other land. In order to create high-speed lines specialist engineers and technicians are required to participate in the construction and planning of high-speed train services. However, large parcels of land must often be purchased or set aside to build new, dedicated high-speed tracks. This is where active community participation and environmental assessments become critical, particularly in the initial planning stages of the high-speed project.

#### Soil erosion is media hype – There’s no threat

Simon 97 [Washington Times, <https://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=6139> Julian L., prof. at the U of Maryland and is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.]

Then in a Jan. 11, 1983, speech President Reagan said, "I think we are all aware of the need to do something about soil erosion." The headline on a June 4, 1984, Newsweek "My Turn" article typified how the issue was presented: "A step away from the Dust Bowl." More recently, we have such statements as that of Vice President Al Gore about how "8 acres' worth of prime topsoil floats past Memphis every hour," and that Iowa "used to have an average of 16 inches of the best topsoil in the world. Now it is down to 8 inches " **These are the scam-busting facts**: The long-run trend in the decades up to 1970 was about 1 million acres of total land urbanized per year. The Soil Conservation Service in conjunction with NALS asserted that the rate then jumped to 3 million acres yearly from 1967 to 1975 or 1977. Scholars at several universities and think tanks found that the 3 million-acres-a-year rate was most implausible in light of data from other sources. And we found that the survey on which the NALS based its claim employed a faulty polling technique and had amazing huge errors in arithmetic. The **soil erosion claims were equally ridiculous. According to the USDA, only a tiny proportion of cropland--3 percent--is so erosive that no management practices can help much. Seventy-seven percent of cropland erodes at rates below 5 tons per acre each year, the equilibrium rate at which new soil is formed below the surface; that is, most cropland erodes less than the "no net loss rate." Just 15 percent of U.S. cropland "is moderately erosive and eroding about a 5-ton tolerance. Erosion on the land could be reduced with improved management practices," though this does not necessarily mean the land is in danger or is being managed uneconomically. In short, the aggregate data on the condition of farm and the rate of erosion do not support the concern about soil erosion. What's more, the data suggest that the condition of cropland has been improving rather than worsening**. Theodore W. Schultz, the only agricultural economist to win a Nobel Prize, and Leo V. Mayer of the USDA, both wrote very forcefully that the danger warnings were false. Mr. Schultz cited not only research but also his own lifetime recollections starting as a farm boy in the Dakotas in the 1930s. **But even a Nobel laureate's efforts could not slow the public-relations juggernaut that successfully co-opted the news media, won the minds of the American public, and were used to justify the USDA giveaways.**

#### The most damaging erosion is caused naturally – Their impacts are inevitable.

The National Soil Erosion Research Laboratory (no date) (“Soil Erosion and WEPP Technology,” <http://topsoil.nserl.purdue.edu/nserlweb/weppmain/overview/intro.html>)

Today's society often times focuses on sensational news and short term crises which surround us. By constantly dwelling in the present, many people ignore the long term problems that compound slowly until they reach a crisis level, and may then be very difficult or impossible to correct. [Soil erosion](http://topsoil.nserl.purdue.edu/nserlweb/weppmain/overview/ersn.html) is a continuing long term problem. Natural processes such as the production of soil occur at an alarmingly slower rate than soil can be lost. It is estimated that over 3 billion metric tons of soil are eroded off of our fields and pastures each year by water erosion alone. The main variables affecting water erosion are precipitation and surface runoff. Raindrops, the most common form of precipitation, can be very destructive when they strike bare soil. With impacts of over 20 mph, raindrops splash grains of soil into the air and wash out seeds. Overland flow, or surface runoff, then carries away the detached soil, and may detach additional soils and then sediment which can be deposited elsewhere. Sheet and interrill erosion are mainly caused by rainfall. However, some of the more severe erosion problems such as rill erosion, channel erosion, and gully erosion all result from concentrated overland flow. Other types of erosion by water include landslides.

### AT: Environmental Leadership Addon

#### ( ) There are about a million alt causes to leadership you don’t solve

Stephen Walt, the Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Spring 2002, Naval War College Review, Vol. LV, No. 2, p. 25-26

Other states will be more likely to support American initiatives (and less likely to join forces to thwart them) if they believe American primacy is broadly beneficial. If they think that U.S. power serves the interests of others as well as its own, they may occasionally grumble but will not take active measures to weaken the United States or to hinder its efforts. By contrast, if they think that the United States is insensitive, overweening, selfish, or simply misguided, then it will make sense for them to do less to help the United States and to look for ways to limit U.S. power and defeat American initiatives. Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence to suggest that foreign elites do not see the U.S. role in the world as favorably as most Americans do. According to one recent survey, for example, only 18 percent of Americans thought that the 11 September attacks were caused by U.S. policies, but 58 percent of the foreigners polled did. Similarly, 52 percent of all Americans believe that foreigners like the United States because “it does a lot of good,” but only 21 percent of the foreigners polled share this view.32 Chinese officials habitually warn about the dangers of U.S. “hegemonism”; countries like Iraq seek to portray the United States as a heartless great power that is indifferent to the sufferings of others; and even long-standing U.S. allies worry about the concentration of power in U.S. hands and the unilateralist tendencies that it fosters.33 This means that the United States has a strong incentive for genuine multilateral engagement, largely to convince others that it is not a selfish power bent on exploiting its strength solely for its own benefit. From this perspective, the Bush administration’s undiplomatic rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, of the verification protocol for the biological weapons convention, of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, of the international convention on land mines, and of the International Criminal Court were all steps in the wrong direction. Whatever the substantivemerits of these various agreements, the United States pays a political price in consistently standing apart fromthe prevailing global consensus.Unless it is willing to abdicate an active leadership role in world affairs, the Bush team is going to have to convince other states it is willing to compromise and to cooperate on some important issues even when it does not get everything it wants. At the very least,U.S. leadersmust go beyond the mere appearance of listening and demonstrate a genuine commitment to give-and-take with its principal allies. Failure to do so will underscore the latent belief that the United States is a “rogue superpower” that does not deserve the mantle of global leadership, making it more difficult to rally international support for initiatives thatWashington wants to pursue.34

# \*\*Disadvantages

## \*Budget Disad

### Budget DA – Link

#### High-speed rail exhausts the budget

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

In his State of the Union address, President Barack Obama attempted to revive his faltering high-speed rail (HSR) program by doubling down on his commitment to it: “Within 25 years, our goal is to give 80 percent of Americans access to high-speed rail.… As we speak, routes in California and the Midwest are already underway.”[[1]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1) The reality is that the Midwest routes have been cancelled by newly elected governors in Ohio and Wisconsin, who have returned $1.3 billion in federal HSR grants to the U.S. Treasury, and California’s worsening budget crisis will discourage any state investment in its HSR system, which will cost between $42 billion and $80 billion to complete. Despite these setbacks, however, President Obama is now proposing an extravagantly costly system to serve the “urbanized” population (80 percent of the total U.S. population) that resides in the 514 communities and metropolitan areas. Although the President offers no cost estimate for this ambitious project, which would use immense federal subsidies to undermine the existing private and tax-paying bus and air service to these communities, it would likely be one of the costliest and most underutilized federal programs in American history. As noted, California’s HSR plan to connect Los Angeles with San Francisco could cost up to $80 billion, Amtrak estimates that HSR in the Northeast Corridor would cost $117 billion, and the modest Tampa to Orlando plan will come in at $3 billion or more. A federal commitment to HSR has been a key component of President Obama’s domestic policy agenda since he took office. In the first month of his Administration, President Obama used the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the “stimulus” package) to create a new federal program to build a comprehensive HSR system. Congress agreed to dedicate $8 billion of the $787 billion in stimulus spending to begin developing HSR in the United States. In addition, Obama requested and Congress approved an additional $5 billion over the next five years beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2010. At the same time, then-Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure James Oberstar (D–MN) announced that the next highway reauthorization bill would include an additional $50 billion for HSR. Shortly thereafter, the many industries benefiting from massive federal spending on HSR formed the US High Speed Rail Association to lobby for the program.[[2]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2) Reflecting the excitement that gripped the new Administration, President Obama proclaimed in April 2009: What we’re talking about is a vision for high-speed rail in America. Imagine boarding a train in the center of a city. No racing to an airport and across a terminal, no delays, no sitting on the tarmac, no lost luggage, no taking off your shoes…. Imagine whisking through towns at speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination. Imagine what a great project that would be to rebuild America.[[3]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3) Even though the President’s HSR plans have suffered several major setbacks and the federal budget faces a $1.4 trillion deficit, the Administration remains undeterred in its pursuit of this costly scheme. In mid-February, Vice President Joseph Biden provided a few more details on the President’s proposal when he announced plans to spend $57 billion on HSR over the next six years.[[4]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4)

#### Collapses economy

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

Abstract: President Barack Obama has committed the United States to building at least 13 high-speed rail (HSR) lines, one of the most expensive forms of [transportation](http://www.heritage.org/issues/transportation) that a nation could choose. Even in a strong economy, building HSR makes little sense, offering minimal reductions in travel times at exorbitant costs. In the current weak economy and with the government facing massive budget deficits, the country simply cannot afford to squander $8 billion in stimulus funding, $5 billion over the next five years, and billions of dollars in matching state funding on a transportation system that will at best serve a minute fraction of the traveling public. The country would be better off either not spending the money or spending it on something productive.

#### High-speed rail will more than exhaust the budget

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Abstract: President Barack Obama’s high-speed rail program promises to spend hundreds of billions of dollars in federal and state funds to provide mediocre passenger rail service to an extremely small fraction of travelers. In this time of tight budgets, neither the federal government nor the states can afford such extravagance. Instead of creating a heavily subsidized, underutilized passenger rail system, Congress and the Administration should promptly end the program and use the recovered funds to reduce the federal budget deficit.

### Budget DA – Link

#### HSR collapse budget – new subsidies, increasing estimated costs, and future demands for new rail

Randal O’Toole, “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

[High Costs of High-Speed Rail](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22top)

While the Obama administration has started funding high-speed rail, it has no detailed financial plan, no cost estimates for the proposed system, no source of long-term funding, and no expectation that passenger fares will cover all of the operating costs or any of the capital costs. Only two high-speed rail routes in the world, Tokyo-Osaka and Paris-Lyon, earn enough revenues to cover capital and operating costs.[4](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn4) The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) plan, upon which the Obama administration is basing its high-speed rail ideas, could more accurately be titled "moderate-speed rail."[5](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn5) For the most part, it calls for trains running no faster than 110 miles per hour, which high-speed rail aficionados do not even consider to be true high-speed rail. Such trains would hardly be innovative: starting in the 1930s, several American railroads regularly operated passenger trains at top speeds of 110 miles per hour or more. Yet those fast trains did not stop the decline of passenger trains after World War II. Amtrak today runs trains at top speeds of 100 miles per hour or more in several corridors, but top speeds are far greater than average speeds. For example, the average speed in the Boston-to-Washington corridor is less than 85 miles per hour. The Obama administration has two reasons for focusing on moderate-speed rail instead of true high-speed rail. First, a complete network of true high-speed rail lines would be "prohibitively expensive," according to Amtrak's president.[6](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn6) Thus, Obama's plan calls for running 110-mile-per-hour passenger trains on existing tracks shared with freight trains. For safety reasons, faster trains would require the construction of an entirely new rail system. It is much less expensive to upgrade existing tracks to support 110-mile-per-hour trains than to build brand-new tracks. Second, the administration wants to aid private freight railroads at the same time it builds the new passenger rail system. President Obama hopes that upgrading freight lines to run faster passenger trains will also allow the railroads to increase their freight speeds and capacities, thus capturing traffic from truckers. Historically, the freight railroads have received very little federal aid: only 18,700 of 350,000 miles of rail lines built in the United States received federal subsidies.[7](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn7) Adding new federal subsidies at a time of massive federal budget deficits is not a good idea, and it could lead to the reregulation of the freight railroads, which were deregulated in 1979.[8](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn8) Even though moderate-speed passenger trains are less expensive than true high-speed trains, they are still very expensive. Upgrading the 12,800 miles of track in the administration's plan to moderate-speed rail standards would cost far more than the $14.5 billion the president has proposed to spend so far. The entire 12,800-mile Obama-FRA system would cost at least $50 billion.[9](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn9) Rather than build the entire system, Obama's plan really just invited states to apply for funds to pay for small portions of the system. For example, the administration granted close to $1 billion to Wisconsin to upgrade existing tracks from Milwaukee to Madison to 110-mph standards. This 85-mile line is only a tiny portion of the eventual planned route from Chicago to Minneapolis, and no one knows who will pay the billions necessary to complete that route. One cautionary note on high-speed rail costs comes from California. In November 2008, California voters agreed that the state should sell nearly $10 billion worth of bonds to start constructing a 220-mile-per-hour high-speed rail line from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The state's estimated cost for the entire system jumped from $25 billion in 2000 to $45 billion by 2008.[10](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn10) However, one independent analysis concluded that the rail line would cost up to $81 billion.[11](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn11) Thus, the costs of a true high-speed rail system would be far higher than the costs of a medium-speed system on existing tracks, as envisioned by the Obama administration. To build a 12,800-mile system of high-speed trains would cost close to $1 trillion, based on the costs estimates of the California system.[12](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn12) It is unlikely that the nation could afford such a vast expense, particularly since our state and federal governments are already in huge fiscal trouble. Also, consider how the costs would rise even higher once a new rail system gets underway. The 12,800-mile FRA network reaches only 42 states and only a handful of cities in those states. Every excluded state and city is represented by senators and representatives who will wonder why their constituents have to pay for a rail system that only serves other areas. And even in the 42 states in the plan, routes are discontinuous, with no high-speed links between many pairs of major cities such as New York and Chicago. Groups representing all the excluded routes would lobby for rail lines, and overall costs would balloon over time. And the costs mentioned are only the capital costs. Most high-speed rail lines wouldn't cover their operating costs, so there would have to be billions of dollars in ongoing subsidies to the system. If the ridership on an expensive new rail system was very large, the high costs would seem more reasonable. But, unlike the interstate highway system, which is heavily used by almost all Americans, only a small elite would use high-speed rail. In 2007, the average American traveled 4,000 miles and shipped 2,000 ton-miles of freight over the interstate highways.[13](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn13) By comparison, total annual use of a high-speed rail system would not likely be much more than 100 miles per person. And considering the premium fares charged to ride high-speed rail, most users would likely be higher-income white-collar workers.

### Budget DA – Link

#### To restore fiscal sanity congress must not invest in HSR

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

Decision Time for America As the preceding analysis reveals, the potential for serious financial problems with an HSR program include: Perpetual massive government subsidies and larger budget deficits; Wasted money because few passengers will use the system even with the high per-passenger subsidies for operating and capital costs; Service provided to only a small fraction of the traveling public in a handful of communities; Additional burdens imposed on hard-pressed state governments, which will be required to match the perpetual federal subsidies to build the system; Little or no difference in passenger mobility or environmental quality; and The creation of high-paying, low-productivity union jobs for political supporters. While these deficiencies make the HSR program a winner for some of the President's supporters and some Members of Congress, it will be a major loser for the taxpayers who will be forced to fund this new system. Most taxpayers will continue to travel by more cost-effective and largely self-financed modes, such as cars and airplanes. They will also find that government will continue to shortchange their preferred transportation choices, notably autos and airlines, to pander to key constituencies: environmentalists, rail hobbyists, and labor unions. Given that more than 20 percent of federal transportation funding already goes to [transit](http://www.heritage.org/issues/transportation/transit), which serves less than 2 percent of passengers nationwide, the federal government is quite capable of squandering even more money on additional low-value and underutilized transportation projects such as HSR. Conclusion As a chastened Congress looks back at the many mistakes it has made over the past year and a half, its more sensible Members will have many opportunities in 2010 to make amends and restore some measure of fiscal sanity to the federal government. Two of the first opportunities will be President Obama's over-the-top follow-up HSR spending plans: an additional $8 billion through the ARRA and $5 billion over the next five years in the Administration's FY 2010 budget proposal. Meanwhile, Representative James Oberstar (D-WI), chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, has introduced legislation to provide $50 billion to HSR over the next five years. All of these proposals would waste massive amounts of money that the nation can ill afford to waste.

### Budget DA – Link

#### Causes deficit equal to entitlement programs

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “America's Coming High-Speed Rail Financial Disaster”, April 13, 2010

In January 2010, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation belatedly awarded $8 billion in the stimulus grants for high-speed rail (HSR) as authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).[[1]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn1) By pushing for these grants and promising to spend an additional $5 billion over the next five years, the Obama Administration has committed the United States to one of the most expensive forms of transportation that a nation could choose. In addition to the billions of dollars in capital costs that the federal and state governments will incur, domestic and international experience indicates that the President has committed the nation to providing a perpetual stream of substantial subsidies to offset the difference between fare revenues and operating costs of HSR and passenger rail in general. As a result, the HSR program could come to rival the nature of some entitlement programs in how much it will contribute to out-of-control annual federal deficits. High Costs of Low Technology At present, the United States has no genuine HSR lines, although some consider the Acela, which operates in the Northeast Corridor, to be an HSR line. Although there is no fixed rule as to what constitutes HSR, a common definition is a rail line that operates at an average speed of at least 125 miles per hour (mph). Some HSR lines in France and Japan maintain average speeds in excess of 180 mph. While the Acela averages about 85 mph, it can reach about 150 mph on a short section of the line between New York City and Boston. To sustain these speeds over long routes requires a substantial investment in a secure and exclusive roadbed built to precise standards and tolerances, using equipment that meets the same high standards. As a result, an HSR line costs much more to build and operate than an ordinary passenger rail line. It is believed that only two HSR lines in the world earn enough revenue to cover operating and capital costs: Paris-Lyon and Tokyo-Osaka.[[2]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn2) The world's passenger rail systems consist mostly of "ordinary" passenger rail, which operates at average speeds between 50 mph and 85 mph. Some systems include a few genuine HSR lines. In the United States, passenger rail (Amtrak) is the most heavily subsidized of all passenger travel modes, requiring a federal subsidy of $237.53 per 1,000 passenger miles, compared to $4.23 for commercial aviation and $1.50 for intercity busses.[[3]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn3) Rail subsidies in Europe are just as high, if not higher. In addition to the high costs that the HSR program will impose on taxpayers during a period of economic hardship and slow recovery, the President's commitment to HSR raises serious questions about his judgment and the judgment of his economic advisers. They presumably thought, given all of the options before them, that this program would be a good use of scarce taxpayer money to spur the economy. As the editorial board of the liberal St. Louis Post-Dispatch recently concluded, "With apologies to futurists, people in the construction industry and rail buffs, investing $13 billion (or even $8 billion) in passenger railroads is a little like building a bridge to the 19th century."[[4]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn4) How Could They Have Gone So Wrong? The FRA report listing each of the HSR awards and the brief justification for each award actually reveals how little benefit the FRA can find in each of these projects relative to their cost. This deeply flawed outcome makes one wonder what could possibly have transpired during the FRA decision-making process to produce this multi-year, multibillion-dollar commitment to obsolete technology. One has to wonder what exactly motivated the FRA review team to endorse the proposed $1.1 billion investment in the Kansas City-St. Louis-Chicago route, which would allow customers to reach their destinations 10 percent faster than they could by driving between Chicago and St. Louis. The same thought applies to the $1.25 billion federal investment in a $3.2 billion project to build a high-speed rail line between Orlando and Tampa, which would reduce travel time between the two cities to less than one hour, compared to about 90 minutes by car.[[5]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn5) In essence, the federal government is paying massive subsidies to achieve minor benefits for a tiny fraction of the traveling public. From another perspective, the Obama transportation team apparently thinks that shaving a few minutes here and a few minutes there from a handful of intercity trips will soften the pain of the Great Recession and propel the economy forward. Yet achieving these modest goals will require a number of years, $8 billion in federal taxpayer money today, another $5 billion in federal money over the next five years, and an even greater sum from the unfortunate taxpayers of the states that are receiving these federal awards. However extravagant this commitment to jazzed-up 19th century technology may be, the ultimate costs of bringing HSR to the 13 corridors already approved by the FRA will be staggering. California received a $2.3 billion grant toward an HSR rail system with an official cost of $50.2 billion (in 2006 dollars), but independent analysts contend that it will more likely cost $81.4 billion.[[6]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn6) The supposed benefits do not even begin to justify the exorbitant costs. Along the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak's Acela pretends to provide high-speed train service. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Inspector General estimates that reducing travel time between Washington, D.C., and New York City and between New York City and Boston by 30 minutes each will cost $14 billion while reducing auto ridership along the corridor by less than 1 percent.[[7]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/03/america-s-coming-high-speed-rail-financial-disaster#_ftn7)

### Budget DA – Link – Budget Creep

#### HSR will cause budget creep

Randal O’Toole, “High Speed Rail”, Downsizing the Federal Government, CATO Institute, June 2010. http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail

High-speed passenger rail has received increasing interest by policymakers in recent years. President Barack Obama is a strong supporter of high-speed rail, and Congress included $8 billion in high-speed rail funding in the 2009 economic stimulus legislation. Congress appropriated an additional $2.5 billion for 2010, and the president is proposing $1 billion annually in high-speed rail funding over the next several years.[1](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn1) Under the Obama administration's 2009 national high-speed rail plan, about 8,500 route-miles of high-speed trains would connect cities in 33 states.[2](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn2) In an example of budget creep, however, the administration's updated plan in 2010 included more than 12,800 route-miles in 42 states.[3](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail#_edn3) As federal funding gets underway, various states have also launched high-speed rail initiatives. In 2008, for example, California voters gave the green light for the state to issue nearly $10 billion of bonds to partly fund a high-speed rail line from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Rail supporters have dreams of an American high-speed train revolution in the years ahead, but this essay takes a more sober view by looking at the actual costs and benefits of such a system. The reality is that high-speed rail systems are extraordinarily expensive and serve only a small and elite group of people even in those nations that have the longest experience with them. High-speed rail is not a grand solution to America's congestion and mobility problems, as it is often alleged to be. While high-speed trains in Europe and Japan are technologically impressive, nearly all the routes in those jurisdictions lose money and need large subsidies to stay afloat. America's geography is even less suited for a successful high-speed rail system than Europe or Japan because our cities are less dense and spaced farther apart. The federal government should withdraw its support for high-speed rail, and instead focus on major [aviation](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/airports-atc) and [highway](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/highway-funding) reforms to improve the nation's mobility. America faces major transportation challenges, but throwing taxpayer funds down a high-speed rail money pit will not solve them.

#### HSR is a slippery slope of economic mismanagement

Randal O’Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans: How Government

Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future. “High-Speed Rail Is Not “Interstate 2.0””, Cato Institute, September 9, 2009

The Cost of High-Speed Rail Although the Federal Railroad Administration has not released any estimates of the cost of high-speed rail, several states have. Cost assessments must recognize that the FRA is actually proposing two very different technologies. In most of the country, the vision calls for “moderate-speed rail,” that is, upgrading existing freight lines to allow passenger trains to run up to 110 mph. These would be conventional Amtrak trains powered largely by conventional diesel locomotives. In 2004, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, a consortium of state departments of transportation, estimated that upgrading existing tracks to 110-mph standards would cost an average of $2.4 million per mile.3 (All of these costs include locomotives, rail cars, and stations, as well as new tracks or upgrades to existing tracks.) Adjusting this amount to allow for increases in construction costs since 2004 results in an average cost of $3.5 million per mile.4 The entire FRA plan calls for about 8,500 miles of moderate- and high-speed rail routes in the United States. At $3.5 million per mile, this would cost nearly $30 billion. The $8 billion that Congress has already approved and $5 billion that the administration has requested over the next five years would not pay for even half of this. In California and possibly Florida, however, the FRA plan calls for building entirely new tracks suitable for operating trains faster than 120 miles per hour. In 2005, the Florida High Speed Rail Authority estimated that construction of a rail line powered by gas-turbine locomotives would cost between $22 million and $27 million per mile.5 Using the midpoint of this range and adjusting for increases in construction costs since 2005 brings the average cost to $31 million per mile. At this price, the entire FRA corridor from Tampa to Miami via Orlando would cost $11.1 billion. In 2008, the California High-Speed Rail Authority estimated that a 490-mile initial segment from San Francisco to Anaheim would cost $33 billion, or about $67 million a mile.6 California is proposing to run trains at higher speeds than Florida was considering (220 mph vs. 125 mph), but the main differences in costs are due to California’s more mountainous terrain and the infrastructure needed to electrify the trains. At this price, California’s San Francisco–Anaheim line, with branches to Sacramento, Riverside, and San Diego, would cost $52 billion. The entire FRA plan, then, would cost about $90 billion. On a per-mile basis, this cost is greater than the 46,800-mile Interstate Highway System, which cost about $425 billion in 2008 dollars.7 While true high-speed rail would cost between $31 and $67 million per mile, the interstates cost less than $10 million per mile. While the average cost of moderate- speed rail would be $3.5 million per mile, the interstates cost just $2 million per lane mile.8 If Congress and the states manage to find $90 billion to build the FRA system, the costs are unlikely to stop there. The system contains important gaps, including Dallas-Houston, Jacksonville-Orlando, and Los Angeles–Las Vegas. None of the Rocky Mountain states are included, but Colorado’s Rocky Mountain Rail Authority is promoting high-speed rail there. Since well over half of the $90 billion cost of the FRA plan is for California, which has less than 10 percent of the route miles, elected officials in other states are likely to demand that they get true high-speed rail, too. One lesson that can be learned from Japan’s high-speed rail system is that a politically driven transportation system ends up building far more than is economically rational. Japan’s first high-speed rail line, from Tokyo to Osaka, actually made money because it connected Japan’s three largest metropolitan areas, which had a combined population of more than 40 million people when the route opened in the mid-1960s (and more than 60 million today).9 But Japanese politicians pressured the government- owned, but profitable, Japanese National Railways to build more lines into remote locations. By 1987, the Japanese National Railways had debts of $350 billion (adjusted for inflation). 10 By comparison, General Motors’ debt when it went bankrupt was only $35 billion.11 The Japanese government absorbed the debt, privatized the railroad, and sold the high-speed lines to private companies for less than half a penny for every dollar spent to build them, even without adjusting for inflation.12 Since then, Japan has continued to build high-speed rail and lease the lines to private railroads at rates that will never recover the construction costs.13 The subsidy to new construction in 2008 alone was almost $30 billion.14 This suggests that high-speed rail is an expensive slippery slope that is hard to exit. If Texas, the Midwest, Colorado, and other states demand true high-speed rail, the same as California, the total cost of the rail system could exceed $550 billion.15

## \*Agenda Disad

### Link – Infrastructure Spending Controversial

#### Infrastructure spending costs Obama capital

Leo Hindery, Jr. and Leo W. Gerard, co chairs on Task Force on Jobs Creation, 5/5/12. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/leo-hindery-jr/job-creation\_b\_1517730.html

Last September we renewed our earlier pleas to Congress to 'pick' the four low-hanging initiatives that would, if the administration and Congress together would only pick them, quickly create millions of new jobs. They were and remain: 1. Buy-Domestic Procurement Requirements. All infrastructure projects funded and guaranteed by the federal government should require purchases to be made in America rather than overseas, consistent with our international trade agreements. As well, in order to qualify as "Made in America," at least 75% of the content should have to be manufactured within our borders. Specifically, Congress should: Require review of domestic content calculations to insure their effectiveness and transparency; Require review of domestic sourcing requirements for all government procurement programs (e.g., Buy American, the Recovery Act) and programs that support U.S. exports (e.g., the Export-Import Bank) to ensure that contracting agencies are obeying and implementing the requirements; and Enact a successor to the 1933 Buy American Act, which is now so dated that whole federal agencies are effectively excused and massive procurement 'loopholes' exist. 2. Infrastructure Investment. After years of under-investing in public infrastructure, America faces an infrastructure deficit of $3 trillion that is impeding economic growth and undermining our economy's efficiency. We need to spend $2.2 trillion just to meet America's core infrastructure needs, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. The administration and Congress should commit to at least $2 trillion of infrastructure spending over the next 10 to 15 years using the resources of a new National Infrastructure Bank that would be an independent financial institution owned by the government and supported by a soft federal guarantee on the order of $200 billion. This federal guarantee, appropriately structured, would not need to be 'scored' for budget purposes given the numerous layers of investment above it. In turn, the Bank should be able to invite private investment, notably including state and local government pension plan investments, aggregating about $1.8 trillion Each $1 billion of infrastructure spending funded by the Bank would create around 25,000 permanent jobs. Two trillion dollars of such spending could equate, over the years, to as many as 50 million new jobs. 3. Credit for Small and Medium-Sized Business. Congress should authorize Federal Reserve-related incentives to accelerate commercial bank lending to small and medium sized enterprises, especially those in the manufacturing sector. As it is, such lending, albeit hard to determine precisely, appears to be down on the order of 20% (or more) from its 2007 level before the Recession began. Such incentives could, most easily, simply include an appropriate reduction in the amount of required Tier 1 bank capital. 4. Trade with China. We need to reform our trading with China, as follows: Enact the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act (HR 639 and S. 328), which would begin to normalize China's grossly undervalued currency, which (according to the esteemed economist Peter Morici just yesterday (May 14)) remains as much 40% undervalued. The House Republican leaders especially are the naysayers on this issue, notably out of step as they are with the Senate leadership and the currency policies of their own presidential candidate, Governor Romney. Stop the U.S. government from entering into a bilateral investment treaty with China until China makes WTO-compliant its Indigenous Innovation Production Accreditation Program. Go after all of China's illegal subsidies, not just its currency manipulation. Put a halt to China's persistent theft of America's valuable intellectual property, which the U.S. International Trade Commission has estimated would immediately create up to 2.1 million new direct private-sector jobs. Case in point: Microsoft, one of the real gems of American ingenuity, recently sold to a large commercial customer in China one unit of its advanced business software, for several hundred dollars; however, when it sent out an upgrade to the software, the upgrade was downloaded thirty million (30,000,000!) times, which is why Microsoft's profits from sales in China, with its 1.3 billion population, are no greater than its profits in The Netherlands, with its population of only 16.7 million. The fundamental problem back in September when we last urged Congress to take the actions set forth above and the one which persists today is simple economic arithmetic: we need to create more than 18 million jobs in order to be at full employment in real terms, and every month that we delay we need to create at least 150,000 more new jobs just to keep up with population growth. Yet traditional jobs programs -- whether training or tax breaks or credits -- are by nature 'smallish' and can create at most thousands of jobs and certainly not the millions we need. With the largely jobless recovery continuing -- only 115,000 new jobs created in April - it's far past time for both Houses of Congress to work with the Obama administration to get really serious about large-scale job creation. Specifically with Congress, President Obama needs to spend his political capital in moving initiatives forward -- initiatives that will be central to his reelection campaign and top priority items during the rest of this Congressional year including the lame duck session. The alternative of totally leaving job creation to the private sector did not work under President George W. Bush, when the Recession was just starting and the magnitude of the impending real unemployment crisis was unknown. And it certainly won't work in the still-troubled economy we have today, with all respect to Governor Romney who seemingly believes otherwise.

### Link – Infrastructure Spending Controversial – GOP

#### GOP hates infrastructure spending

Dave Johnson, Fellow for Campaign for America’s Future, Transportation and Infrastructure = Immediate Jobs = Deficit Reduction, 5/1/2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-johnson/transportation-infrastruc\_b\_1469356.html

President Obama spoke Monday at the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department Legislative Conference in Washington, asking Republicans to stop blocking infrastructure and transportation projects. (See transcript here.) These projects would immediately create jobs, which would immediately start reducing the country's deficit -- which is probably why Republicans are blocking them There are millions of infrastructure jobs that absolutely need doing. There are millions of people out of work who really, really need jobs. On top of that the cost of financing is the lowest ever. So maintaining and modernizing our infrastructure would immediately put millions of people to work. But wait, there's more! Modernizing our infrastructure would make our economy more efficient and our businesses more competitive, bringing returns for decades. So, of course, with all these points going for it Republicans are blocking it. The Obstruction We have been deferring infrastructure maintenance since the Reagan years, but in recent years Republicans have doubled down on blocking public investment, calling it "just more government spending" and even "socialism." And, they complain, construction projects help union members. So Republicans have blocked bill after bill to repair and modernize the infrastructure, or to maintain and modernize our aging transportation system, build high-speed rail, etc. The president discussed this obstruction in his speech ... over the last year, I've sent Congress a whole series of jobs bills that would have put your members back to work. But time after time, Republicans have gotten together and said "no." I sent them a jobs bill that would have put hundreds of thousands of construction workers back to work repairing our roads, bridges, schools and transit systems, along with saving the jobs of cops, teachers, and firefighters, and creating a new tax cut for businesses. They said "no." Then, I sent them just the part of that bill that would have created those construction jobs. They said "no." And we're seeing it again right now. As we speak, House Republicans are refusing to pass a bipartisan bill that could guarantee work for millions of construction workers. Seeing a pattern here? That makes no sense. Congress should do the right thing and pass this bill right away.

### Link – HSR Unpopular

#### High-speed rail funding is controversial – FRA transparency issues and high costs

Petra Todorovich et al, Daniel Schned, and Robert Lane, director of America 2050, associate planner for America 2050 and senior fellow for urban design at Regional Plan Association and founding principal of Plan & Process LLP, “High-Speed Rail International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers”, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2011

By mid-2011, the distribution of grants largely reflected the status of rail planning efforts across the country, with some attention to geographic equity. The FRA’s grantmaking process was criticized for a lack of transparency by Chairman John Mica of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. However, a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that he commissioned states: “The FRA established a fair and objective approach for distributing these funds and substantially followed recommended discretional grant award practices used throughout the government” (U.S. GAO 2011, 22). By August 2011, two years after the launch of the HSIPR Program, nearly 75 percent of the awarded funds had been released to 25 states, the District of Columbia, and Amtrak, allowing them to start work. However, the program continues to face criticisms, largely focused on the perceived high cost of rail investments; unimpressive trip time savings; and the lengthy timeline for rail planning, engineering, environmental review, and construction.

#### HSR is a punching bag for fiscal conservatives and liberal suburbanites

Will Oremus, “Requiem for a Train: High-speed rail is dead in America. Should we mourn it?”, Salon, December 7, 2011

If you live in Los Angeles, Orlando, Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee, Raleigh, or any number of other U.S. cities, chances are you’ve read a news story that started something like this: “Imagine stepping on a train in [your city] and stepping off in [another major city] just two-and-a-half hours later. This dream could become a reality in the next [unrealistic number] years, thanks to plans for a national network of high-speed rail lines.” Well, you can stop imagining it now. High-speed rail isn’t happening in America. Not anytime soon. Probably not ever. The questions now are (1) what killed it, and (2) should we mourn its passing? There was a brief burst of enthusiasm around the future of high-speed rail in January 2010, when President Obama [announced](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-vice-president-biden-announce-8-billion-high-speed-rail-projects-ac) $8 billion in federal stimulus spending to start building “America’s first nationwide program of high-speed intercity passenger rail service.” Since then, however, the project’s chances of success have been heading in one direction: downhill. First, Tea Party conservatives in Florida and wealthy liberal suburbanites in the Bay Area began questioning their states’ plans. Then, just as Joe Biden was [calling for $53 billion](http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/02/08/biden.rail.network/index.html) in high-speed-rail spending over the next six years, a crop of freshly elected Republican governors turned down billions in federal money for lines in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida. Finally, Republicans in Congress [zeroed out the federal high-speed rail budget](http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/railroads/194399-gop-pronounces-obama-rail-plans-dead) last month. (To understand [why conservatives hate trains](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2011/03/off_the_rails.html), see my colleague Dave Weigel’s story from earlier this year.) Though Republicans’ outright rejection of high-speed rail is short-sighted, so were many of the plans themselves. Rather than focus on the few corridors that need high-speed rail lines the most, the Obama administration doled out half a billion here and half a billion there, a strategy better-suited to currying political support than to addressing real infrastructure problems. Spread across 10 corridors, each between 100 and 600 miles long, Obama’s rail system would have been, at best, a disjointed patchwork. The nation’s most gridlocked corridor, along the East Coast between Washington, D.C. and Boston, was left out of the plans entirely. Worse, much of the money was allocated to projects that weren’t high-speed rail at all. The Europeans define high-speed trains as those that travel at speeds of 155 miles per hour or more (or 125 mph for tracks that are upgraded, rather than newly built). Wisconsin’s proposed $823 million Milwaukee-to-Madison line was to reach 110 mph, at most, in between stops in cities such as Brookfield and Oconomowoc. Ohio’s version was even slower, with trains on an upgraded freight-rail track topping out at 79 mph. With stops, the trip from Cincinnati to Cleveland would have been significantly slower by rail than by car. Who would ride such a thing? Former Ohio governor Ted Strickland, a Democrat, [bemoaned](http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/09/save-high-speed-rail-departing-ohio-governor-urges/?pagewanted=all) the jobs that would be lost when his Republican successor killed the project. But at a cost of $400 million, this was job creation of the sort that John Maynard Keynes himself would have eyed skeptically. Florida’s $2.4 billion Tampa-to-Orlando line made more sense, but it was no surprise that Republican Gov. Rick Scott nixed it in February. By that time, high-speed rail had already become a punch line among fiscal conservatives.

### Link – HSR Unpopular

#### Massive fight – lobbies, budget concerns, and competitors

Brian Kingsley Krumm, Harold A. Shertz Award Winner for legal writing – JD at U of Tennessee College of Law Notes: High Speed Ground Transportation Systems: A Future Component of America's Intermodal Network?, Transportation Law Journal, 1994, 22 Transp. L. J. 309

V. Policy and Legislative Analysis The Clinton Administration envisions the development of HSGT as a component of an integrated intercity transportation system that includes aviation and HSGT systems in complementary roles, each technology serving its appropriate market niche. n66 As part of this vision, HSGT systems would be fully integrated with intercity bus and intracity bus, rail, and transit systems. Diversions from short-haul air service would free scarce airport capacity, which could then be used for more profitable longer-haul service. n67 HSGT would also address highway congestion by diverting a portion of highway trips. n68 This would result in an improved environment and reduced dependence on fossil fuels. Such policy objectives are widely supported by a large segment of the traveling public, as well as politicians who see HSGT as a mechanism for bringing jobs and economic development to their states. However, a number of forces shaping the high speed rail legislation today have little to do with the development of a coherent, long-term transportation policy. The primary force is the federal budget deficit, a major "stumbling block" to the implementation of HSGT systems in the United States. n69 High speed ground transportation infrastructure is costly, and costs increase as the design speed increases. n70 Funding for HSGT projects and programs has not met expectations; the 1993 and 1994 appropriations for HSGT system development under ISTEA were not funded as authorized. The Clinton Administration's "incremental approach" to HSGT, which builds on existing infrastructure and requires little or no acquisition of rights-of-way, is at least in part a recognition that levels of funding anticipated for HSGT infrastructure development during the campaign, are unlikely to be realized in this period of fiscal restraint. Ultimately, the incremental approach may prove to be a politically desirable strategy for the Administration to pursue. In order to obtain the broad-based support needed in Congress to pass the High Speed Rail Development Act, the potential must exist for a broad spectrum of states to at least be eligible for funding. The incremental approach offers just such an allure. Although states may not be currently pursuing formal plans for HSGT systems, they do have existing railroads which could serve as the backbone for incremental upgrading. The legislation is written broadly enough to be attractive to legislators whose states lack such formal plans, yet provides the Secretary of Transportation with the necessary discretion to focus the funding once appropriated. This will allow the DOT to fund those projects that have the greatest potential for successful development and operation. However, the same characteristics in the legislation that initially attracted strong bipartisan support in the House Energy and Commerce Committee have come under fire from the railroad unions and freight railroads which would provide most of the trackage under the incremental approach. The transportation unions, which believe the new routes could result in layoffs or wage cuts for workers on conventional rail and bus lines, want provisions included to protect them from such career-ending events. n71 Although the version of the bill that the House Energy and Commerce Committee reported on July 27, 1993 includes several provi [\*321] sions to protect transportation workers, it does not go far enough to satisfy the unions, and goes too far for many Republicans who might otherwise support the bill. n72 Additionally, the freight railroads want shielding from lawsuits that might result from high speed rail accidents occurring on their trackage. Discussions concerning this liability are being pursued within the House Judiciary Committee, but no solution has been found. n73 A proposal which would place a cap on the liability of the freight railroads was recently submitted to Senator Ernest Hollings by the Association of American Railroads. n74 Such liability concerns are likely to be amplified as a result of the recent wreck of Amtrak's Sunset Limited. n75 In addition to the concerns expressed by the transportation unions and the freight railroads, there is also fierce competition from other modes of transportation, both for the limited share of the federal funds and for the potential passengers or users of the particular mode of transportation. An example of this competition is the Partnership for Improved Air Travel, a lobbying effort supported by the large airline and aircraft companies to pursue additional public spending on airports and opposing proposed increases in airline ticket and fuel taxes. n76 The Chairman of Southwest Airlines, Herb Kellehar, the chief spokesperson for this group, is also a major opponent of HSGT. n77 Southwest Airlines bitterly opposes the construction of HSGT, especially the Texas high speed rail line that would provide service to a number of the cities that the airline currently serves. n78 The lobby places subtle, yet effective, pressure [\*322] on Congress not to subsidize HSGT at the expense of "self supporting" commercial aviation, conveniently overlooking the massive subsidies that the airlines enjoy. n79 Compounding the problem that other modes of transportation must also compete for federal transportation dollars is the fact that the Clinton Administration legislation and the DOT place the responsibility for making important transportation financial resource allocation decisions on the state and local governments. Although it appears to be sound fiscal policy to ensure that adequate public and financial commitment exists for HSGT projects at the state and local levels before the federal government participates financially, a number of practical concerns need to be considered.

### Link – HSR Unpopular

#### HSR is controversial – it’ll cost capital and focus

Mark Reutter, former editor of Railroad History and author of Making Steel: Sparrows Point and the Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might, “Budgeting for a Fast Train Future”, Progressive Policy Institute, February 14, 2011.

For one, Obama’s proposal will need to withstand the political strain of special interests vested in the “old ways” of funding highways from preset state formulas and congressional earmarks. For another, House Transportation Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) has his own ideas: a six-year bill of only $250 billion (less than half of what Obama wants). A quarter of a trillion equals the amount of tax revenues expected from federal gas taxes. The good news is that Mica understands that America needs better surface transportation, including selective high-speed rail. His solution is leveraging private capital with federal funds. Getting high-speed rail into the dedicated funding scheme of the transportation bill is the essential first step to attract private capital. Mica knows this and will need to educate his colleagues to this basic fact of economic life. Raising the 18.4 cents-per-gallon federal gas tax, which has remained unchanged since 1993, could help fund the $556 billion Obama proposes. This approach has been endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but faces congressional opposition because of the potential public blowback of higher taxes at the pump. In short, winning approval for better transportation in the tricky crosswinds of a divided Congress and tax-phobic public is going to require the White House to stay laser-focused on the right track.

#### HSR funding costs capital – guaranteed fights

Daniel Wood, CSM Staff Writer, GOP critic calls Joe Biden's $53 billion high-speed rail plan 'insanity'. Christian Science Monitor, 08827729, 2/8/2011

Vice President Joe Biden Tuesday proposed that the US government infuse $53 billion into a national high-speed rail network. The announcement was met immediately by deep skepticism from two House Republicans that could be crucial to the plan's success, raising questions about whether it can clear Capitol Hill. House Transportation Committee Chair Rep. John Mica (R) of Florida said previous administration grants to high-speed rail projects were a failure, producing "snail speed trains to nowhere." He called Amtrak a "Soviet-style train system" and said it "hijacked" nearly all the administration's rail projects. Meanwhile, Railroads Subcommittee Chair Rep. Bill Shuster (R) of Pennsylvania said Mr. Biden's plan was "insanity," adding: "Rail projects that are not economically sound will not 'win the future' " – coopting the slogan President Obama coined in his State of the Union address. With Republicans controlling the House and dedicating themselves to deep budget cuts, any new spending proposed by the White House will face stiff scrutiny. But Congressman Shuster offers some hope of compromise. On Jan. 28 in Hartford, Conn., he proclaimed his support for expanding high-speed rail in the Northeast, backing a network that could stretch from Montreal to Washington, D.C. "This is the most congested region in the country. High-speed rail here could be profitable," he said.

### Link – HSR Unpopular – GOP

#### GOP hates the HSR

Zhenhua Chen, PhD student at the George Mason University, School of Public Policy, and is currently working as a graduate research assistant under the supervision of Prof. Jonathan Gifford in the area of transportation policy Transportation Law Journal, Article: Is the Policy Window Open for High-Speed Rail in the United States: A Perspectives from the Multiple Streams Model of Policymaking, Summer, 2011, 38 Transp. L. J. 115

In the MS model, flowing independently alongside the problem and policy streams, the political stream is composed of such things as national mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological alignments in Congress, and changes of administration. n81 The emergence of a HSR is mostly pushed by two major components of political stream: ideological alignments in Congress and changes of administration. In the United States, the idea of HSR stands for a new dimensional perspective that aims at solving contemporary transportation problems, such as relieving congestion and greenhouse gas reduction. n82 However, because of the unpredictable social and economic outcomes and tremendous capital cost, Republicans and Democrats have formed different standpoints regarding government's role in HSR spending. Republicans generally represent a conservative ideology on government spending. They believe government spending on HSR is too risky to be affordable. n83 Democrats, generally represent a liberal ideology, prefer increasing government spending on HSR to spur development and achieve better connection among city centers. n84 These ideological discrepancies can be tracked by the recent usage debate of HSR stimulus money in Madison, Wisconsin. [\*130] Democrats proposed a new state office building be one of the first new station stops on a high-speed rail network paid for primarily with federal dollars, while Republicans opposed that idea because of a concern about runaway government spending. n85 From a broader view, through the party initiation of HSR and Maglev related bills proposed from 1991 to 2008 (See Table 2), HSR and Maglev matters are more likely to be addressed by Democrats than Republicans in Congress. n86 Consequently, the shift of the political majority in both Congress and the administration directly affects the viability of HSR proposals on the governmental agendas.

### Link – HSR Unpopular – Fossil Fuel Industry

#### Fossil Fuel industry insures a HSR fight

Joshua D. Prok, University of Denver Sturm College of Law, B.A. (2004) University of Colorado at Boulder Article: High Speed Rail: Planning and Financing the Next Fifty Years of American Mobility, Transportation Law Journal, Spring, 2009, 36 Transp. L. J. 47

Former President George W. Bush recently stated, "America's got to change its habits; we've got to get off oil[... ] Until we change our habits, there's going to be more dependency on oil." n192 The existing high speed rail development structure entails a choice among technological alternatives that rely on different power sources for locomotion, namely: diesel, electricity, n193 and electromagnetism. n194 In an environmentally-sensitive age, society is perhaps more motivated to develop high speed rail technologies that will rely less on fossil fuels, especially foreign oil. n195 Since adherence to conventional scarce energy resources for transportation also dictates war and peace, the market becomes another potent factor on this choice as never before. Spiking oil prices in 2008 showed the dangers inherent in the prevailing [\*69] undiversified transportation fuel situation. n196 High and volatile gasoline prices decreased consumer demand for automobiles. n197 High liquid fuel prices, and the weak dollar, even translated to higher food prices. n198 High fuel prices have also forced airlines to cut costs, service routes, and jobs, while increasing fares. n199 As for motor carriers, independent truckers vociferously protested in Washington for relief, one Pennsylvania trucker saying, "if we don't do something, then the next time you see us, we'll be in the welfare line[.] There are so many people here hurting." n200 "Environmentalists, hunters, landowners, and lawmakers" also have rallied to stop domestic oil and gas production. n201 These outcries show that the rising costs of conventional transportation fuels put parts of the transportation business at risk. At the same time, they highlight an opportunity to diversify and change. The current energy economy thus provides an atmosphere that should prompt high speed rail planners to choose electrified systems. France adopted a Grand Strategy to power its intercity rail with nuclear and hydroelectric generation. n202 It subsequently reduced its carbon emissions from liquid fuels by some 34% in 2000; meanwhile, the U.S. increased its emissions by 2.4% during the same timeframe. n203 Indicating a break from this shameful record, President Obama made environmental stewardship part of his campaign platform in 2008. n204

#### Special interest politics backlash

Phillip Longman, senior fellow at New America Foundation, “Back on Tracks: A nineteenth-century technology could be the solution to our twenty-first-century problems.” Washington Monthly, Jan/Feb 2009

The glory days of American railroads are now beyond the memory of most Americans. Rail service was already in decline during the Depression, and the gas rationing and logistical strains of World War II made train travel a standing-room-only horror. In large part because of that generational experience, most Americans came to believe that the decline of railroads was an inevitable part of the march of progress. But the reality is close to the opposite. Especially for long-haul freight, steel wheel on steel rail is a far superior technology, and its eclipse by rubber wheels is mostly the result of special interest politics, ill-considered public policies, and other factors that have nothing to do with efficiency. Manipulated by Wall Street and often badly managed, railroads were ultimately no match for the growing combination of interests—Standard Oil, General Motors, tire and asphalt makers—that grew into the auto-highway complex. For decades, railroads were also slowly crippled by state and federal laws that forced them to run money-losing passenger trains and to keep on featherbedding employees rendered obsolete by new technology. Rail companies, as private-sector entities, remained responsible for maintaining their own infrastructure and for paying increasingly high property taxes on it, even as public money poured into highway and airport construction. And when railroads improved their efficiency, as they did substantially after World War II, they were often prevented by the now-defunct Interstate Commerce Commission from passing the savings on to shippers, which resulted in further loss of market share to trucks.

### Link Turns Aff

#### Public support key – gets funding and private groups involved

Joshua D. Prok, J.D. University of Denver Sturm College of Law, B.A. (2004) University of Colorado at Boulder Article: High Speed Rail: Planning and Financing the Next Fifty Years of American Mobility, Transportation Law Journal, Spring, 2009, 36 Transp. L. J. 47

Whether by taxation, administering direct grants and guarantees, controlling debt issuance, or resolving intermodal disputes, governmental mechanisms will largely control funding the advancement of high speed [\*67] rail in the U.S. Therefore, popular support, reflected in the policy forwarded by elected governmental officials, is a key to successful implementation of the existing high speed rail service plans. Wavering public support led to the preliminary failure of a Transrapid maglev project in Germany. n180 Conversely, the enhanced power of government in China may have made their decision to develop high speed rail easier as it built the first commercial high speed maglev route which began revenue service in January 2004. n181 Recently, the Committee on Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs heard testimony regarding the establishment of a National Infrastructure Bank, n182 proposed by Senator Hagel, and modeled after the European Investment Bank, that would use a $ 60 billion initial appropriation to catalyze private investment in infrastructure improvements, including a "railway that is as good as Europe's." n183 Authorizing the National Infrastructure Bank to issue "long bonds" that mature in up to fifty years, and to provide subsidies of "credit insurance, interest rate discounts, or even grants," would constitute a huge step forward in putting State high speed rail plans into action. n184

Without risking paternalism, or even socialism, in continuing high speed rail development policy, another way to gauge public support is to enhance public participation in the planning process. The federal government is already implementing pilot programs that encourage public participation in the transit planning process. n185 Also, the FTA's work in encouraging Transit Oriented Development is important for the public to practically use new high speed rail. n186 Integrating high speed rail into intermodal transportation hubs, like the San Francisco International Airport, will make high speed rail accessible and competitive in the intercity transportation market. n187 California meets this need by accommodating high speed rail development into airport facilities. n188 Florida also recognized [\*68] the benefits of high speed rail in the urban development overflow of "associated development." n189 Such associated development has already occurred around railroads in Texas. n190 If the public is more involved in planning, and continuing urban development and renewal provides a lifestyle conducive to using transit systems, including intercity high speed rail, advocacy for enhanced public funding may become more robust.

Mobilizing public support, however, presents a significant hurdle for bridging the gap from planning to implementing high speed rail in the U.S., given the spirit of individualism that permeates this nation. In this vein, the centuries-old commentary of Alexis de Tocqueville largely still rings true: "[the] American way [is] relying on [oneself] alone to control [one's] judgment." n191 Thus, if the public fails to support bond initiatives to raise capital for high speed rail, or appears unreceptive to transit oriented development, market forces will provide the extra impetus to surmount the current challenges in enhancing transportation infrastructure in the U.S.

### AT: Link Turn

#### Unpopular – comparative detractor voice and isn’t seen as an immediate problem

Will Oremus, “Requiem for a Train: High-speed rail is dead in America. Should we mourn it?”, Salon, December 7, 2011

The modern federal government isn’t good at solving long-term problems (if it ever was). Most Republicans don’t believe the government should solve problems. They believe big government, in fact, is the one of the only problems that can’t be solved by the free market. Democrats, as seen in the failures of all of these railroad projects, err by assuming that the government can solve problems more effectively than it realistically can. Ultimately, high-speed rail’s backers weren’t as staunch as its detractors. Barack Obama and congressional Democrats put their political lives on the line for health care, addressing an immediate problem whose consequences were personal and visceral. The nation’s outdated infrastructure is a major dilemma but one that doesn’t feel as pressing to most voters and legislators. It’s our children’s problem now.

#### HSR costs capital – long term benefits aren’t considered

Zhenhua Chen, PhD student at the George Mason University, School of Public Policy, and is currently working as a graduate research assistant under the supervision of Prof. Jonathan Gifford in the area of transportation policy Transportation Law Journal, Article: Is the Policy Window Open for High-Speed Rail in the United States: A Perspectives from the Multiple Streams Model of Policymaking, Summer, 2011, 38 Transp. L. J. 115

One common objective for these HSR policy proposals is to build an efficient HSR system in the United States. However, neither lawmakers nor the President have personal experience with HSR. n67 Therefore, when the idea of HSR is addressed, reactions from both Congress and the White House are very cautious. n68 Under such a scenario, for HSR to be accepted, policymakers must be persuaded that HSR can benefit the nation. It seems that the long-term benefits, such as congestion alleviation and energy consumption reduction, are too far off in the future to see any practical immediate effects. n69 Consequently, those tangible advantages that can be seen in a short term are preferred by policy communities in order to prove its feasibility.

#### HSR will cost massive capital and spending – critics are impassioned

Congressional Digest, High-Speed Rail Investing in a New National Transportation Infrastructure, 2011. www.congressionaldigestdebates.com

Although Congress has debated the feasibility of highspeed rail off and on since the 1960s, enthusiasm usually faded in the face of such obstacles as cost and competition with other transportation priorities. It returned in February 2009, however, with the provision of $8 billion for intercity passenger rail and high-speed rail projects in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, followed by an Obama Administration proposal announced last month to invest $53 billion in high-speed rail over the next six years. State governments, rail advocates, and environmentalists responded positively, and the “Buy America” requirement in the Administration’s proposal drew commitments from foreign as well as domestic rail manufacturers to expand their bases and hire American workers. In recent months, however, some aspects of the plan have begun to unravel, as newly elected Republican governors in Florida, Wisconsin, and Ohio have rejected Federal funding for high-speed rail initiatives in their States, saying that their share of the construction and operating costs made the projects impractical and unaffordable. High-speed rail promoters in Congress and around the country remain undeterred, viewing the technology as essential to developing a strong twenty-first century economy in the face of dwindling oil supplies, increasing highway and airport congestion, and the need to create new manufacturing jobs. They argue that if America fails to invest now in a modern domestic transportation infrastructure, the Nation will be unable to compete successfully in the global economy. America need only look to its past, they reason, when progress was possible because previous generations had the foresight to imagine and invest in bold infrastructure projects that citizens rely on and take for granted today. Opponents are equally vehement in their assertion that the costs are too high and the benefits too low for highspeed rail to be a viable transportation option for the United States. They maintain that the President’s proposal would commit the Nation to a perpetual stream of Federal subsidies to offset the operating costs of a national high-speed rail network — and that the program, in fact, could become the equivalent of another Federal “entitlement” in its impact on budget deficits. Critics are skeptical that a sufficient number of people would actually use the system, given the continued convenience of cars and predicted advancements in that technology. They also note that high-speed rail lines elsewhere in the world have yet to earn enough revenue to cover construction and operating costs, and rely heavily on government subsidies. In light of the United States’ lack of experience in highspeed rail, the many funding and other challenges projects are likely to face, and the variety of the arguments for and against its development, Congress has a lot to consider. Although the zeal among many for high-speed rail is not likely to be squelched, a commitment by public and private interests of all persuasions may be needed for such a major undertaking to become a reality.

## \*Elections Links

### Elections DA – Link

#### Rail is unpopular is key states – Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Consequently, supporting or opposing the President’s rail plan became an issue in several gubernatorial races, particularly in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida, where the winning candidates either opposed or questioned the value of the federal rail grant. In Wisconsin, incoming Governor Scott Walker (R) opposed the plan, and outgoing Governor James Doyle (D) suspended the project in response to the voters’ decision. In Ohio, gubernatorial candidate John Kasich (R) campaigned against accepting the $450 million HSR grant to provide passenger service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati, and Governor Kasich canceled the project shortly after he assumed office. A September 2009 study of the Ohio project’s viability concluded that the average speed of the service would not exceed 39 miles per hour when the stops were included and that its cost would be closer to $581 million. In response to the threatened rejection, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood argued, “If you build it they will come,” and “People like to ride trains.… You don’t build these trains to travel faster, although sometimes you do.”[[6]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6) Apparently, Ohio voters were unmoved by Secretary LaHood’s rationalizations and elected Kasich governor. The FRA has since diverted the $810 million to extend Amtrak’s Hiawatha line from Milwaukee to Madison and the $450 million to be spent in Ohio to other HSR projects, primarily in California and Florida.

#### Scott will block – deny Obama construction jobs for 2012 election

Mark Reutter, former editor of Railroad History and author of Making Steel: Sparrows Point and the Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might, “Why High-Speed Rail Could Still Get Built in Florida”, Progressive Policy Institute, March 16, 2011

Make no mistake, Scott’s opposition to fast trains is ideological, not fiscal. If he were on a crusade to rein in all transportation spending in tough economic times, that would be one thing. But Scott is proposing to spend billions of dollars to expand highways (including I-4) and dredge the Port of Miami for supercargo ships that are likely [never to dock there](http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2011-03-01/news/os-mike-thomas-rick-scott-ports-0301120110301_1_ports-rail-cash-rick-scott), while denouncing “Obama rail” as imprudent. His maneuvering is as transparent as Gov. Scott Walker’s bid to undercut unions and generally turn back the clock in Wisconsin. It should be recalled that Walker rejected federal rail funds last fall. Now Rick Scott wants to make a bigger splash by denying Obama credit for creating thousands of construction jobs in a swing state in time for the 2012 election. In a recent letter the four mayors (two Republicans and two Democrats) outlined the economic benefits of fast rail linking world-class tourist attractions, top medical and educational centers and other institutions in central Florida. The Tampa-Orlando line would be a starting point for a comprehensive train system, with 170-mph-plus trains eventually linking O rlando with Miami and Jacksonville. And what would happen if the project does not go forward? “The decision will not contribute one bit to reducing the federal deficit or lowering the federal taxes Floridians pay,” the mayors noted. What it would demonstrate is how devilishly difficult it’s become to build innovative public works in an era of sound-bite politics.

### Elections DA – Link

#### California plan unpopular – oversold and public wants new vote

Will Oremus, “Requiem for a Train: High-speed rail is dead in America. Should we mourn it?”, Salon, December 7, 2011

The project was oversold from the beginning, with projections of 100 million riders per year and healthy operating profits—yes, profits, on a railroad—leading to skepticism even among those inclined to support it. Along with the usual conservative opponents, the wealthy liberals living along the railroad’s proposed path in Palo Alto and neighboring cities—sufficiently motivated by the prospect of trains roaring literally through their backyards—began to uncover holes in the financing scheme as well. Rather than take them seriously, the rail line’s bullheaded backers attempted to steamroll the opposition, branding them NIMBYs and “[rotten apples](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRecXlwFXWA).” Sure, they were NIMBYs, but it didn’t make them wrong. And when they leveraged their connections and media savvy to get state lawmakers, academics, and [journalists like me](http://dev.trainorders.com/discussion/read.php?4,2119969) to investigate, the findings that came back damaged the project’s credibility.

Under pressure to come up with more realistic projections, state rail authorities [admitted last month](http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_19238187) that the project would take twice as long to build as they’d originally claimed, attract fewer riders, and cost twice as much. The honesty was welcome, but it came too late: A poll released this week showed the public has turned against high-speed rail altogether, with [nearly two-thirds](http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_19484490) saying they’d like a chance to reconsider.

#### HSR in California unpopular

Joel Fox, Editor of **Fox** & Hounds and President of the Small Business Action Committee, “You Can’t Build High Speed Rail With No Money”, Fox and Hounds, April 18, 2012. http://www.foxandhoundsdaily.com/2012/04/you-cant-build-high-speed-rail-with-no-money/

So where is the money going to come from for California’s High Speed Rail project? The new HSR plan says two-thirds of the revenue will come from the Feds. With a Senate Subcommittee taking a similar attitude as the Republican controlled House that seems unlikely. Private funding? That was part of the original plan. However, private funders want to feel there is a chance to make a profit. If you consider the High Speed Rail Committee’s constantly shape-shifting proposal as a poorly conceived business plan, investors would be foolish to take the risk. Could HSR pay largely for itself with ridership fees? The estimates on ridership on the HSR have been laughable from the beginning – and that’s being kind. What about the governor’s plan to use fees generated by the greenhouse gases law, AB 32, for subsidizing the HSR? Such a move is legally questionable. If such a move were attempted a lawsuit over taxes, fees, and the voters right of approval would probably be filed. The idea may also violate the dictates of AB 32. The Legislative Analyst noted that the HSR effect on greenhouse gases would take an extremely long time and would not be within the required timeline required by AB 32 for greenhouse gas reduction. If all these funding alternatives fail that leaves the taxpayers. In 2008 when the HSR bond was on the ballot, voters were told the project would cost $33-billion; that private funds would rush to the project; that annual ridership would equal the population of a number of states – all promises that now appear false. Polling indicates the voters have changed their minds about supporting HSR. The taxpayers should not be on the hook for this project. While the legislature is likely to postpone the decision on the HSR to study the facts, legislators should also consider Senator Doug LaMalfa’s proposal to give the voters another chance to vote on the idea.

## \*Federalism Links

### Federalism DA – Link

#### High-speed rail investment is a states issue

[Tad DeHaven](http://www.cato.org/people/tad-dehaven), “[High-Speed Rail and Federalism](http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/high-speed-rail-and-federalism/)”, May 11, 2011. http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/high-speed-rail-and-federalism/

Florida Governor Rick Scott deserves a big round of applause for dealing a major setback to the Obama administration’s costly plan for a national system of high-speed rail. [As Randal O’Toole explains](http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/the-administration-concedes-defeat/#more-31446), the administration needed Florida to keep the $2.4 billion it was awarded to build a high-speed Orlando-to-Tampa line in order to build “momentum” for its plan. Instead, Scott put the interests of his taxpayers first and told the administration “no thanks.” That’s the good news. The bad news is that the administration is going to dole the money back out to 22 passenger-rail projects in other states. Florida taxpayers were spared their state’s share of maintaining the line, but they’re still going to be forced to help foot the bill for passenger-rail projects in other states. Here’s Randal’s summary: Instead, the Department of Transportation gave [nearly $1 billion](http://www.dot.gov/affairs/2011/dot5711.html) of the $2.4 billion to Amtrak and states in the Northeast Corridor to replace worn out infrastructure and slightly speed up trains in that corridor, as well as connecting routes such as New Haven to Hartford and New York to Albany. Most of the rest of the money went to Midwestern states—Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, and Missouri—to buy new trains, improve stations, and do engineering studies of a few corridors such as the vital Minneapolis-to-Duluth corridor. Trains going an average of 57 mph instead of 52 mph are not going to inspire the public to spend $53 billion more on high-speed rail. The administration did give California $300 million for its high-speed rail program. But, with that grant, the state still has only about 10 percent of the $65 billion estimated cost of a San Francisco-to-Los Angeles line, and there is no more money in the till. If the $300 million is ever spent, it will be for a 220-mph [train to nowhere](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/24/opinion/24white.html) in California’s Central Valley. Why should Floridians be taxed by the federal government to pay for passenger-rail in the northeast? If the states in the Northeast Corridor want to pick up the subsidy tab from the federal government, go for it. (I argue in a Cato essay on [Amtrak](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/amtrak/subsidies) that if the Northeast Corridor possesses the population density to support passenger-rail then it should just be privatized.) I don’t know if taxpayers in Northeast Corridor would want to pick up the federal government’s share of the subsidies, but I’m pretty sure California taxpayers wouldn’t be interested in footing the entire $65 billion for their state’s high-speed boondoggle-in-the-works. [As I’ve discussed before](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/high-speed-federalism-fight), the agitators for a national system of high-speed rail know this: If California’s beleaguered taxpayers were asked to bear the full cost of financing HSR in their state, they would likely reject it. High-speed rail proponents know this, which is why they agitate to foist a big chunk of the burden onto federal taxpayers. The proponents pretend that HSR rail is in “the national interest,” but as a Cato essay on [high-speed rail](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/transportation/high-speed-rail) explains, “high-speed rail would not likely capture more than about 1 percent of the nation’s market for passenger travel.” [According to the Wall Street Journal](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703730804576312870609295848.html), congressional Republicans aren’t happy that the administration is taking Florida’s money and spreading it around the country: Monday’s announcement drew criticism from House Republican leaders, who questioned both the decision to divide the money into nearly two-dozen grants around the country—instead of concentrating it into fewer major projects—and the fact that many of the projects will benefit Amtrak, the federally subsidized passenger-rail operator. I heartily agree with the Amtrak complaint, but I’m not sure why as a federal taxpayer I should feel better about instead “concentrating [the money] into fewer major projects.” Subsidizing passenger-rail is no more a proper role of the federal government than education or housing. Unfortunately, for all the criticisms of the Obama administrations and the constant talk about spending cuts, [Republicans don’t appear to possess much more desire to limit the scope of the federal government’s activities than the Democrats](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/budget-cutting-its-1995). See this Cato essay for more on [fiscal federalism](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/fiscal-federalism).

# \*\*CPs

### States CP – Solvency

#### State rail funding works and has multiple sources

Petra Todorovich et al, Daniel Schned, and Robert Lane, director of America 2050, associate planner for America 2050 and senior fellow for urban design at Regional Plan Association and founding principal of Plan & Process LLP, “High-Speed Rail International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers”, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2011

In the absence of consistent federal support for passenger rail, states including California, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington have established dedicated funding streams to improve conventional passenger rail corridors operated by Amtrak. Other states, such as Illinois, Maine, and Vermont, have directed state general funds or flexible federal funds to subsidize and supplement their passenger rail service (U.S. GAO 2010). These state investments have led to the purchase of new rail cars in Washington, track upgrades for and re-electrification of the Keystone Corridor in Pennsylvania, and more frequent, reliable service and higher ridership on all state-sponsored lines. State funding for rail has come from various sources, including portions of state gas and diesel taxes, flexible funding from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, state rental car taxes, and proceeds from specially branded Cash Train scratch lottery tickets in Washington state.

#### States acting in groups now

Darren A. Prum and Sarah L. Catz, Assistant Professor, The Florida State University \*\* Director, Center for Urban Infrastructure; Research Associate, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Irvine ARTICLE: GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION TARGETS AND MASS TRANSIT: CAN THE GOVERNMENT SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISH BOTH WITHOUT A CONFLICT?, Santa Clara Law Review, 2011, 51 Santa Clara L. Rev. 935]

At the same time, decades-old policies that create vicious cycles for more highways and greenhouse gas emissions require revamping to meet the new paradigm of today's reality. n5 Much of our current transportation policy originates from decisions made over a half century ago. n6 Congress revisits and adjusts these plans every six years, but the current policy fails to account for modern environmental issues like global warming and neglects many parts of the country that need assistance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Recognizing the threat from climate change and seeking solutions of their own, several states individually and collectively have begun searching for short and long term solutions. Some states, like Florida, directly mandate that local governments evaluate the impact of transportation on greenhouse gases, n7 while California uses an environmental agency to develop specific targets for emission reductions based on pollution sources. n8 [\*937] In another interesting turn of events and due to a lack of action by the federal government in the past to create a comprehensive national approach, regional compacts amongst states and provinces now occur across North America to combat climate change. n9 These regional compacts look to create "cap-and-trade" zones with regard to the emissions of greenhouse gases in their jurisdictions so that uniformity occurs over a broad geographic region. n10

### States CP - Solvency

#### States act together through regional pacts

Darren A. Prum and Sarah L. Catz, Assistant Professor, The Florida State University \*\* Director, Center for Urban Infrastructure; Research Associate, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Irvine ARTICLE: GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION TARGETS AND MASS TRANSIT: CAN THE GOVERNMENT SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISH BOTH WITHOUT A CONFLICT?, Santa Clara Law Review, 2011, 51 Santa Clara L. Rev. 935]

In considering the efforts by other states with respect to greenhouse gas emissions and transit, three main strategies emerge. Some states take action on their own while others choose to band together for a regional approach or some [\*957] combination of both applications occurs. Accordingly, both require examination. 1. State Initiatives Following California's lead, many other states decided to exercise their own authority to protect their jurisdictions against climate change. The government strategies that tackle greenhouse gases in the context of transit tend to get grouped into four different categories: Technology, Fuels, Travel Activity, and Vehicle/System Operations. n126 In the context of this examination, the effect of technology on greenhouse gas emissions remains largely a federal one and mainly affects transit indirectly. States have two options with regard to vehicle emissions. Should the State of California satisfy its special exception requirements under the Clean Air Act, n127 other states may choose between adopting the baseline federal level or the more stringent California one. Recently, many states began selecting the California approach with sixteen states already announcing adoption of the California approach or the intention to proceed in that direction. n128 Interestingly, the federal [\*958] government also agreed to match the California standards by 2017, n129 which makes the state regulatory aspect a nonfactor. From a fuels perspective, many states have adopted different standards to limit carbon content, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a per-mile-driven basis. n130 Correspondingly, thirty-eight different states decided to encourage the use and production of this alternative through tax exemptions, credits, or grants. n131 Taking this approach to a higher level, thirteen states created a unique blend of fuel for its jurisdiction. n132 While the different fuel standards will lower greenhouse gas pollution, their greatest impact will occur with emissions emanating from automobiles and light duty trucks. Furthermore, the blends will affect some forms of transit, like buses, but will have essentially no direct effect on the delivery of transit options from a state regulatory aspect. Finally, many states took action to limit their jurisdiction's growth of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), n133 which comes from both the travel activity and vehicle/system operations factors. In this area, the state and local governments can cause a reduction in greenhouse gases by encouraging changes in habits like idling less, fewer trips, and traveling shorter distances through their various policy [\*959] tools. n134 In short, many states choose to promote these changes by setting goals or targets for reducing VMT, and sometimes a jurisdiction adopts "smart growth" policies as well. n135 As previously discussed in the SB 375 section, "smart growth" regulations that link land use with transportation systems can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. State legislatures use these "smart growth" strategies to create initiatives to reprioritize land use, promote alternative modes of transportation, create individual incentives, and foster system efficiencies to achieve their emission goals. n136 Based on these understandings (and aside from California's legislation), other states have enacted smart growth laws that directly impact transit and mention environmental concerns; n137 but these states' approaches seldom take the added step of tying these goals directly to land use strategies with mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. n138 For instance, the State of Washington's legislature passed the Growth Management Act in 1990 because the legislature found that, uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals ... pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and [\*960] coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning. n139 From this starting point, the legislation specifically mandated ecological goals that encompass comprehensive plans while including development regulations to protect the environment, boost the State's high quality of life, encourage different modes of transportation, and improve air and water quality. n140 In accordance with the legislative goals, the act mandated transit-oriented site planning, including traffic demand management programs, because the new "fully contained communities," major industrial developments in master planned locations, and areas planned for multiple industrial sites outside urban growth areas will most likely create significant greenhouse gas emissions by requiring individuals to commute great distances. n141 While the act sought to prevent uncoordinated and unplanned growth in Washington, n142 it stopped short of mandating greenhouse gas emission targets, like the comparable legislation in California, despite recent recommendations from studies conducted by two governmental agencies in Washington. n143 Likewise, Florida passed legislation in 2008 that requires local comprehensive plans to take into account supporting energy efficient development patterns and schemes that dissuade urban sprawl. n144 The statute also includes a unique directive for local governments to adopt "transportation strategies to address reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector." n145 This means that the plans must encourage walking and bicycling while requiring the [\*961] establishment of "transportation demand management programs" that reduce per capita VMTs. n146 Thus, many states try to challenge global climate change through Technology, Fuels, Travel Activity, and Vehicle/Systems Operations. Nonetheless, the California legislation provides a groundbreaking approach, unmatched by other states, that now ties the existing travel activity category with broad greenhouse gas emission targets and land use plans in order to assemble a comprehensive effort to combat climate change. 2. Regional Approaches Aside from each states' individual approaches, many states have decided to pursue the reduction of greenhouse gases in conjunction with other jurisdictions. Through this strategy, these states can increase efficiency because more uniform regulatory settings occur and duplicative efforts are removed. n147 One of the earliest programs to try this approach was the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) formed by several states in the Northeast. n148 The plan began with a Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by seven governors in December 2005 with the goal of reversing global warming. n149 Following the RGGI approach, several Western states formed the Western Climate Initiative in February 2007, n150 and several states in the Midwest created the [\*962] Midwestern Regional Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord in November 2007. n151 Interestingly, the State of Florida initially planned to implement its own program, but may instead join another association or foster one within the Southeastern region. n152 In reviewing these initiatives, their main emphasis includes the creation of programs to lower carbon dioxide emissions from the existing production of electricity, to expand the generation of power from renewable sources, to collect data on renewable energy credits, and to conduct research and develop guidelines for carbon sequestration. n153 The RGGI approaches its mission through a "cap-and-trade" type of program aimed solely at electrical generation. n154 The other initiatives, however, augment the "cap-and-trade" by including industrial combustion and processing sources along with fuels used by residential, industrial, and commercial buildings, as well as in transportation. n155

### States CP – Solvency Advocate

#### Here’s our devolve solvency advocate

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Turn Back” Transportation to the States,” Heritage, 2012

Out of this melee for money will emerge a new transportation bill that will reflect the influence of many lobbyists and influential constituencies—euphemistically referred to as stakeholders—rather than the needs of the motorists or truckers who pay the taxes to fund the program, as well as the requirements of an economy that depends on cost-effective mobility. With the latest dispute still unresolved, Congress and the President should try to escape this predictable money morass and instead craft a plan that benefits the motorists, bus operators, and truckers who pay the federal fuel tax that fills the trust fund and finances the system. To accomplish this, any new legislation should: Be limited to programs that enhance mobility and safety; Add capacity where needed on modes that people want to use; Relieve congestion; Upgrade existing infrastructure; and Devolve the resources and decision making to the states, which know their priorities better than Washington does. The government could accomplish these goals with a simple, efficient, and attractive option: Return the federal highway programs to the states, where much of the responsibility had been lodged until the Federal Aid Highway Act was enacted in 1956.

#### Devolution bills introduced annually

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Turn Back” Transportation to the States,” Heritage, 2012

Keep the Pressure On The first “turn back” bill was introduced in Congress in 1997 by Senator Connie Mack (R–FL) and Representative John Kasich (R–OH). It earned about two dozen co-sponsors and received the explicit endorsement of more than 20 states—mostly donors. Since then, some version of a turnback bill has been introduced in every Congress, and while none has come close to passing, the defects in the program that have led to ongoing interest in the bills have come under scrutiny and concern. Subsequent reauthorization bills have attempted, with some modest success, to address the equity issue. More recently, however, the House and Senate versions of the next reauthorization bill propose to reverse the past trends toward an increasingly Washington-centric program significantly by giving the states more flexibility in deciding how the funds they receive from the federal trust fund can be spent. With momentum moving in turnback’s favor, the existence of these bills will keep the pressure on for a program of greater state responsibility and discretion.

### AT: State Budgets DA

#### HSR will balloon State budgets – rail projects require state matching funds and perpetual state subsidies

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Ohio and Wisconsin Reject the Federal Funds. For inexplicable reasons, in January 2010, the FRA awarded $4.5 billion (56 percent) of the HSR funds to existing freight railroads for track improvements that would benefit them and existing and prospective slow-speed Amtrak service that shares the same tracks under contract with the freight railroads that own the tracks on which Amtrak operates. The FRA awarded just $3.5 billion (44 percent) to only two genuine HSR projects, those in California and Florida.[[5]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5) Not surprisingly, HSR advocates were disappointed and expressed their concerns accordingly. Because all of these projects—slow-speed and high-speed—would require substantial state matching funds and perpetual state operating subsidies (since no passenger rail system in the U.S. and only a handful abroad earn a profit or break even), any state accepting the money would also be accepting a significant, long-term financial liability at a time when most states are hard-pressed to meet the core responsibilities of education, law enforcement, and public health.

#### HSR investment in California will fail – too costly, lack of FRA commitment, and will increase California budget deficit

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

California Dreamin’ Meets the Fiscal Nightmare. California’s HSR plan was the most ambitious of the plans that sought FRA funding. The FRA awarded California $2.3 billion to start the project in January 2010 and added $624 million in December 2010, albeit with a set of peculiar restrictions that have further undermined the public’s perception of the President’s HSR program. As originally proposed and endorsed by referendum in 2008, the state’s HSR plan was to build a main north–south line connecting Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Fresno, and San Francisco with planned service expansion to San Luis Obispo, San Diego, Stockton, and Sacramento. Approximately 1,955 miles of track was to be built or upgraded. Building the initial 800-mile core of the system was initially and officially estimated to cost $43 billion. In January 2010, California received $2.3 billion, by far the largest of the FRA HSR grants, to begin work on its system. By then, however, California’s fiscal situation had deteriorated further, and private investors expressed little interest in investing the estimated $9 billion to make it work. Numerous reports and studies suggested that costs could reach $80 billion and that ridership would be less than projected.[[7]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn7) The evidence suggests that California’s HSR project will likely never be built. Indeed, in mid-February, an independent fiscal watchdog group in California estimated that the cost of the first phase of the system has escalated to $63 billion.[[8]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn8) Apparently, the FRA felt the same way. When it redirected a portion of the Wisconsin and Ohio money to California, it required California to spend the first $4.3 billion in state and federal funds on a 54-mile line in the San Joaquin Valley to connect the city of Corcoran (population 25,700) with Borden, an unincorporated town in Madera County. As one analyst has concluded, “The segment was adopted under pressure by the United States Department of Transportation, which was interested in ensuring that the line would be usable (have ‘independent utility’) by Amtrak should the high speed rail project be cancelled due to lack of funds.”[[9]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn9) In effect, the FRA is hedging its bets and salvaging what it can in recognition that California may never build the system. If this sort of costly bet hedging is what passes for fiscal responsibility in the Obama Administration, then this grant seems ripe for a congressional rescission that would recapture the money for the government and apply it to deficit reduction. Congress would be hard-pressed to find an annual savings of nearly $3 billion from a single unpopular project, and California’s beleaguered budget would also benefit.

### AT: State Budgets DA

#### Federal hand-outs cause State deficits

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, “Time to End Obama’s Costly High-Speed Rail Program”, Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2011.

Despite the huge costs that the system will incur, its performance will be mediocre compared to other systems. As a recent Reason Foundation report reveals, Florida’s proposed HSR system is expected to be more hype than high-speed: [T]he proposed speeds are substantially below those of state-of-the-art high-speed rail systems in China, Japan and France, which operate from 34 to 70 percent faster on comparable segments. The Tampa to Orlando high-speed rail line speeds are more on a par with Amtrak’s Acela service in the Washington to Boston corridor. Part of the reason for the slower speeds of the Tampa to Orlando line is its operation as a tourist rail shuttle service within the Orlando metropolitan area.[[14]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn14) The report estimates that the project could actually cost up to $3 billion more than the estimated $2.7 billion.[[15]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn15) Although the status of the Florida project remains in limbo as of mid-February, Governor Scott noted in his February 7, 2011, budget proposal: Florida accepted one-time handouts from the federal government. Those temporary resources allowed state and local governments to spend beyond their means. There was never any reason to think that Florida taxpayers could continue that higher level of spending once the federal handouts are gone. The false expectation by federal hand-outs are the reason we hear about a multi-billion dollar deficit. As one observer noted, “The words ‘high-speed rail’ and ‘operating subsidies’ were not mentioned, but the implication was clear.”[[16]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-end-obamas-costly-high-speed-rail-program%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn16) Given the growing opposition from the public, Members of Congress, and state and local officials to Obama’s HSR program and the uncertain and disappointing prospects for those systems targeted for federal funding, Congress should consider terminating the program or, at a minimum, placing a temporary hold on any spending for it. Once this is done, Congress should use the time to conduct comprehensive hearings on the benefits of these projects and to consider whether an HSR program makes economic sense in any region of the United States.

### Market CP – Solvency

#### Privates CP – solves and makes profit

CNN, CNN.com staff, “U.S. high-speed rail 'myths' debunked”, April 13, 2011

Comment: "There are NO high speed rail projects in the world that are profitable. None. They are all taxpayer/government subsidized."-- CNN.com user "aksdad"  Expert response: 'Not necessarily true' [Robert Puentes at the Brookings Institution:](http://www.brookings.edu/experts/puentesr.aspx) "The Acela Express, Amtrak's high speed rail service along the Northeast corridor, has shown a positive return from its New York-to-D.C. route." Highways, airlines: "And it's not fair to just point the finger at high speed rail. Highways and other modes of transportation, like the airlines, are heavily subsidized, too." Expert response: Not true [Reps. John Mica](http://mica.house.gov/), R-Florida, chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and [Rep. Bill Shuster](http://shuster.house.gov/), R-Pennsylvania, chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials: "While many high-speed rail systems in the world rely on a government subsidy, this in no way means that rail operations cannot be profitable. Other nations: "Private rail operators in Great Britain, such as South West Transport and Virgin Rail, compete for franchise intercity rail service contracts and regularly generate a profit. Rail routes in Japan and France turn a profit." Private sector: "Rather than relying on the federal government and Amtrak to operate profitable passenger rail, we must put the focus on the private sector to develop and operate self-sustaining, profitable passenger rail in parts of the country where it makes sense."

### Executive CP – Solvency

#### Executive provisions solve – Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Act allows $35 billion in federal loans

Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., is Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, High-Speed Rail: Stealth Budget Plans to Keep the Program Alive, Heritage.org, September 1, 2011.

With Congress eliminating spending for the President’s faltering high-speed rail (HSR) program and making cuts in Amtrak’s soaring subsidies, the Obama Administration appears to be shifting its reliance on funding for its ambitious passenger rail programs to a little-known federal loan program lodged in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT): the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Act (RRIF). This provision allows up $35 billion in federal loans and loan guarantees for rail projects at the discretion of the President. Because nearly all passenger rail systems in the world lose money, these loans are unlikely to be paid back, and taxpayers will be on the hook for multi-billion-dollar losses. Background President Obama used the 2009 stimulus to create and fund an HSR program. An initial $8 billion was provided by the stimulus, and an additional $1 billion per year was to be provided through annual appropriations bills for the five following years. On top of this, the President’s highway reauthorization plan of February 2011 proposed adding an additional $50 billion to the rail program between 2012 and 2018. Notwithstanding the President’s frequent references to the effort as an “HSR system,” in fact only two of the dozens of projects approved—Florida and California—were genuine HSR. Most projects involved modest improvements and extensions to the existing slow-speed Amtrak service. Following a giddy few months of favorable reviews by the media and rail advocates, most Americans came to realize that the President’s program would require extraordinarily large expenditures in return for modest and mediocre transportation benefits. In response, Congress has de-funded parts of the program, and the governors and/or legislatures in several states have refused more than $3 billion in federal HSR grants that DOT had awarded them. At the same time, the most ambitious HSR program in DOT’s portfolio—the California HSR proposal—confronts serious financial problems that may prevent it from being built.[[1]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/high-speed-rail-stealth-budget-plans-to-keep-the-program-alive%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn1) Obama’s Zombie Rail Program In a normal world, these state rejections and congressional terminations would be the death of a costly program. Yet Washington is not a normal world, and poorly conceived legislation—in this case the RRIF, which was created in 1998 and authorized to lend up to $3.5 billion but amended in 2005 by SAFETEA-LU to raise the cap to $35 billion—has resuscitated the dying program. Under the RRIF, the President has authority to lend or guarantee loans up to a total of $35 billion for rail projects. To date, the largest RRIF loan was the 2011 approval of a $563 million loan to Amtrak to buy 70 locomotives.[[2]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/high-speed-rail-stealth-budget-plans-to-keep-the-program-alive%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn2) In that year Amtrak also received $1,565 million in appropriations, and other funds from TIGER grants, sending its annual subsidy for that year to over $2 billion, compared to $1.3 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2008. Amtrak and its supporters will argue that the RRIF contribution is a loan, not a subsidy, but Amtrak loses huge sums of money every year and, on its own, has no capacity to repay any loan of any size. With ticket sales ($1,973,908,000) covering only 53 percent of costs ($3,721,780,000) in FY 2010,[[3]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/high-speed-rail-stealth-budget-plans-to-keep-the-program-alive%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn3) the loan’s debt service payments will be covered by taxpayers. As a result, the RRIF loan is a clever, stealth request for a perpetual “appropriation” that forces Congress to appropriate additional taxpayer dollars each year to service the loans provided by the President. The reality, however, is even worse than this. In the past, when confronted with serious threats of funding cuts or route terminations, Amtrak has argued that it is cheaper to keep it alive—however horrible and costly the service—than to shut it down and pay off the loans, six year’s severance to workers, purchase-leasebacks, mortgages, retiree health care, and pension obligations. In the case of the RRIF loan, Amtrak will likely argue that any reduction in its annual federal subsidy will jeopardize its ability to service this debt, thereby forcing government to incur a $563 million loss. Getting Worse by Several Magnitudes of Fiscal Irresponsibility DOT is now in the process of deepening its commitment to irresponsible rail projects by contemplating an RRIF loan of $6 billion to an HSR boondoggle called the DesertXpress. Supported by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D–NV), DesertXpress will serve the vital national interest of speeding gamblers from Victorville, California (on the desert 85 miles east of Los Angeles), to Las Vegas and back again after they have transferred some portion of their annual incomes to the city’s casinos. To put this project—whose financial prospects are worse than Amtrak’s—into perspective, its failure could require a federal loss of a magnitude equal to two years of federal funding for the National Park Service. In a normal world, this project would not pass the laugh test with DOT staff assigned to review this request. But again, this is not a normal world, and President Obama’s DOT has recently issued a federally funded request for proposals seeking qualified entities to evaluate the proposal on behalf of DOT. Since only a tiny fraction of passenger rail lines in the world (high-speed or low-speed) cover their operating and capital costs,[[4]](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/09/high-speed-rail-stealth-budget-plans-to-keep-the-program-alive%22%20%5Cl%20%22_edn4) it seems likely that Senator Reid’s DesertXpress for Las Vegas gamblers will not fare much better, so there is a high probability that the RRIF debt incurred will ultimately be dumped on the taxpayers. Counting the DesertXpress proposal, if approved, and all of the existing loans already on the books, the RRIF would still have more than $27 billion to lend for future HSR and Amtrak projects. This must not happen.