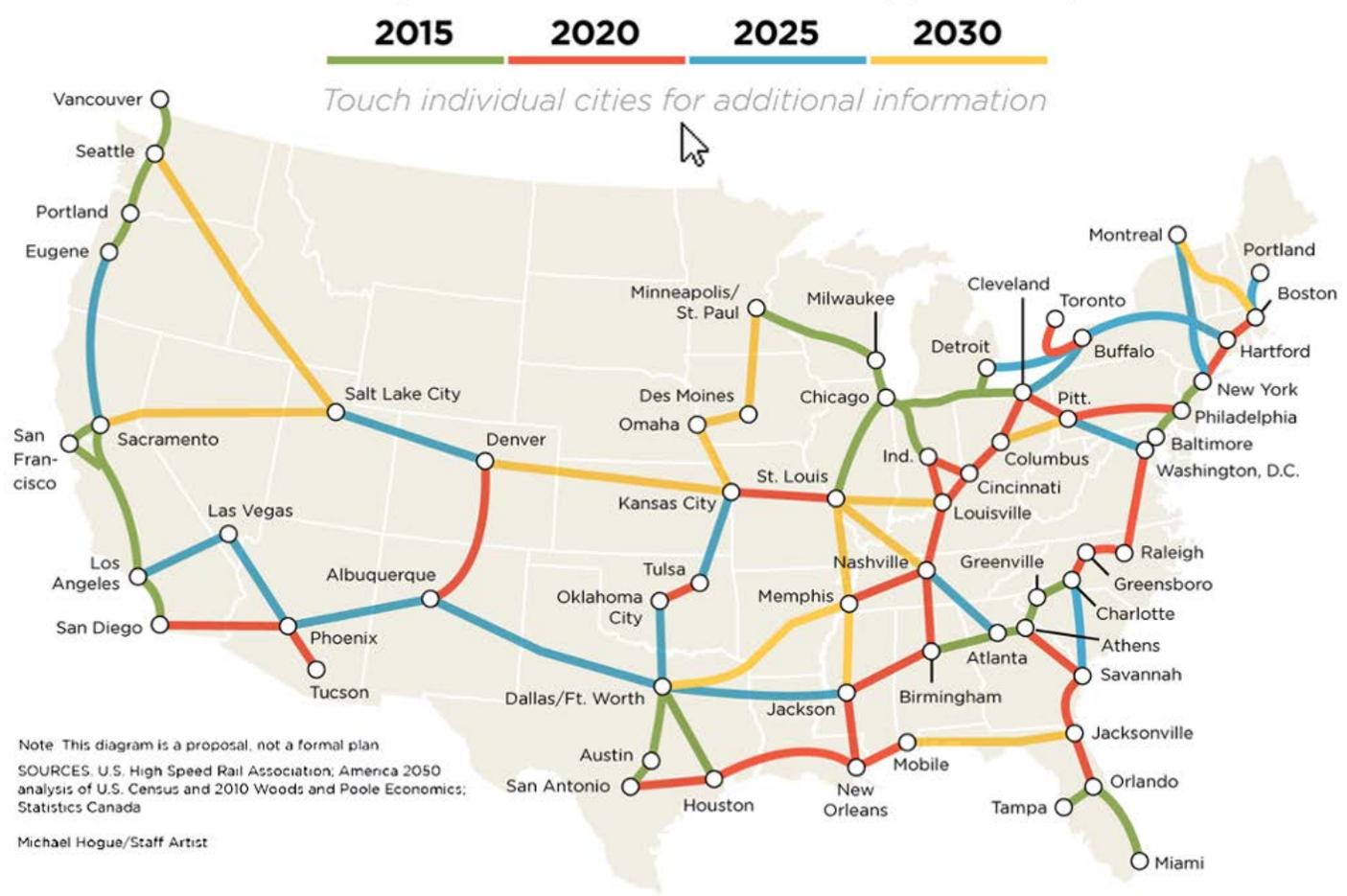


## Need for speed

The U.S. High Speed Rail Association has proposed a 17,000-mile national high-speed rail system that would be built in 4 phases, for completion by 2030. The trains would travel at 220 miles per hour and connect major cities. The network is color-coded by possible completion date:



TRANSPORTATION

# A high-speed unknown

### Politics, money key factors in rail hopes, but Texas also looking at land, water effects

WRITTEN BY  
RANDY LEE LOFTIS | ENVIRONMENTAL WRITER

INFORMATIONAL GRAPHICS BY  
MICHAEL HOGUE | STAFF ARTIST

Published January 18, 2014

**A** ride on a bullet train between cities in Europe or Japan is smooth, quiet and very fast. In other words, it's nothing like launching high-speed passenger rail in the U.S.

High-speed rail's trip through American politics has been bumpy. Hometown feuds, lawsuits and arguments bog it down, most recently in California.

In Texas, the dream of gliding between Dallas and Houston at 200-plus mph is decades old. But in 2014, Dallas to Houston still is by car or bus — or by air with all its bothers.

If the idea of Texas high-speed rail is ever to become reality, planners will have to answer questions about more than money and politics. They also must decide what it would mean for the environment.

That question raises bigger ones about Texas' future — such as how the state will grow, where it will find power and at what environmental cost.

An environmental study of an Oklahoma City-Dallas-South Texas route is underway. A Dallas-Houston review is starting, boosted this month by Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

Dallas-Houston is proposed by Texas Central Railroad, a Dallas company backed by the operator of one of Japan's systems. The company says the line would be privately funded.

Even without knowing future details, experts will check potential effects on land, wetlands and water.

They'll also consider communities, utilities and historic sites — all standard for cross-country projects.

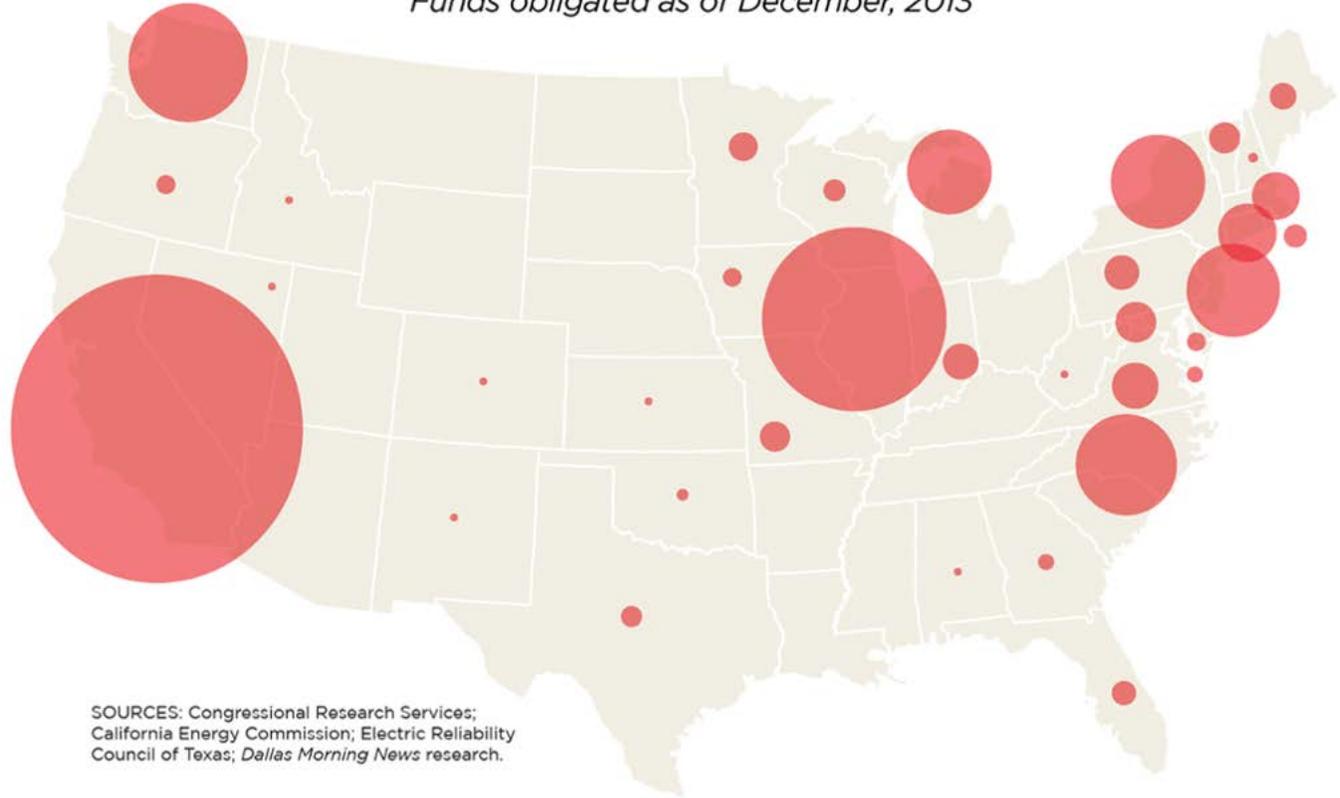
High-speed rail adds two more concerns: electricity and its environmental cost. Those are twins in a state that frets about power supplies and has millions breathing dirty air.

Backers say high-speed rail can use clean energy. Texas leads the nation in wind power.

California plans to buy only clean energy for its planned 800-mile system.

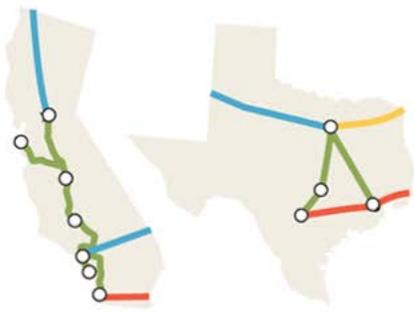
# High-speed intercity passenger rail funding by state

Funds obligated as of December, 2013



## Electricity demand

A look at how California's plan might compare with Texas, as the plan rolls out in phases.



*Demand in gigawatt-hours*

If California's high-speed rail were operating in Texas today, it would increase Texas' energy needs by less than 1/1,500, a seemingly negligible amount.

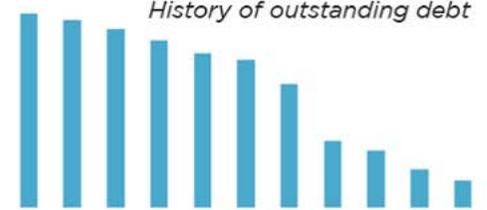
## Train ridership in the U.S. is increasing ...

Amtrak ridership by year



## ... And Amtrak debt is decreasing

History of outstanding debt



Michael Hogue/Staff Artist

## Fast and clean

That is high-speed rail's environmental promise: fast and clean.

One of its most visible promoters is Andy Kunz, president and CEO of the U.S. High Speed Rail Association. Members include train operators, manufacturers and others.

"What's most incredible about high-speed rail is that it's a single investment that can simultaneously help solve climate change, congestion, energy security, energy efficiency, economic development, city revitalization, unemployment and loss of manufacturing," Kunz said.

Skeptics question the benefits.

“Because high-speed rail will only capture a relatively small share of total passenger trips, it is also unlikely to make much difference in achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets and in reducing petroleum consumption,” the Congressional Research Office concluded last month.

High-speed trains through Texas would use their own tracks. Existing Amtrak service in Texas yields to freights.

Even on schedule, Dallas-Fort Worth-San Antonio on Amtrak takes 10 hours and 5 minutes for 314 miles. That’s effectively 31 mph.

At up to 220 mph, high-speed trains slash travel time, but adding stops slows it down. Backers predict 90 minutes for a 240-mile Dallas-Houston express. That’s effectively 160 mph.

Many experts say the quickest approach is to put routes along interstate highways. Land-use basics are already known and the state owns the land.



This image shows an artist's conception of a high-speed rail car in California, where GOP lawmakers criticize plans. (California High-Speed Rail Authority)

## How much power?

Steve Mattingly, an associate professor of civil engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington, reached that conclusion in a study for the state last year.

Because intercity travel uses different power sources — electricity, gasoline and jet fuel — experts compare them with Btus, or British thermal units.

Running high-speed rail uses far less per passenger per mile than driving or flying. Critics often say that ignores energy to build the system. But the same applies to energy to build highways and airports.

It's not known how much a Texas system would need.

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which runs most of Texas' grid, is working on long-range forecasting for all demands, spokeswoman Robbie Searcy said.

California's plans suggest that rail would not stretch Texas' grid much.

California's Energy Commission predicts that at completion in 2024, California's system would use 223 gigawatt-hours per year. At peak in Texas, 1 gigawatt runs about 200,000 homes.

In 2012, generators in ERCOT made 324,000 gigawatt-hours. If California's system were running in Texas today, it would raise the annual energy need by less than 1/1,500.

Air effects depend on future sources. In 2013, coal made up 24 percent of Texas' generating capacity, trumped by cleaner natural gas at 54 percent. Wind and other renewables totaled 16 percent. Nuclear was 6 percent.

While Texas studies, California feels birthing pains.

Last week, as before, California Republicans gave their state's project a verbal thrashing. Democrats followed a pattern of defending it.

"We've heard some pretty grand claims about what it would provide for California," Rep. Doug LaMalfa, R-Calif., said at a House hearing. So far, he said, it's been overruns and lawsuits.

But Karen Hedlund, deputy administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, told House members that another California venture drew 2,300 lawsuits against it: the Golden Gate Bridge.

"Can you imagine anyone today saying it would have been wiser not to build it?" Hedlund asked.

Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., cited an old-time railroad memory to push for a new version to catch up with Europe, Japan and China.

"We started the [first] rail system and now we are the cabooses," Brown said. "And they don't use cabooses anymore."

Facebook { 12 }
 Share { 4 }
 Twitter { 34 }
 Share { 46 }
 Email
 Print

Post a new comment  
 Login ...

Post

### 74 Comments

[RSS](#) | [Subscribe](#)

**UN** 24 hours ago  
 You can never say the Republicans and Tea Partyers never had their counterproposal to the Texan-Mexican bullet train project. They still have their build the wall pet project along the entire Mexican border. Not sure how much that would cost or how the wall and bullet trains projects would integrate, but if these forces continue to campaign against California High Speed Rail then federal funds could be secured to build a bullet train over the wall.

Reply [▼ 1 reply](#) 0 1

**Ken Duble** 14 hours ago  
 ?

Reply 1 0

**Noble Furr** 1 day ago  
 It is clear that Hi-speed Rail would be particularly beneficial in Texas, but only if mostly express routes such as Dallas-Houston as opposed to multiple-stop routes such as Dallas-Ft. Worth-Austin-San Antonio-Houston. For trains to be competitive with air and car travel, they must be fast and be cheaper than flying.

A "Texas Flyer" route between Dallas and Houston would be enormously popular, and if there was a same-station light rail rail connection to Galveston, it would be even more popular.

The idea of placing the HSR (Hi-Speed Rail) tracks next to highway right-of-ways is an interesting concept. It sounds cheaper, and would be the best kind of advertising you could have to get people out of their cars and on the train.

But, there are a couple of serious conditions that could make a HSR option a business failure. If Houston and Dallas do not have convenient, available, and CHEAPER cab fares, HSR would be in jeopardy. (One reason many people drive to Houston from Dallas is the need to have car transportation, and Houston and Dallas both have high cab fares.

I think HSR is a fantastic idea. But, it is also an expensive one that needs to be planned by the private sector instead of government, and run by the private sector instead of government.

Reply [▼ 2 replies](#) 0 0

**Ken Duble** 1 day ago  
 "If Houston and Dallas do not have convenient, available, and CHEAPER cab fares, HSR would be in jeopardy."

While I agree with most of your post, cab fares are irrelevant. Not only do both Dallas and Houston have light rail and streetcar systems, but cab fares themselves are fading into irrelevance with the emergence of such services as Uber and Lyft.

More importantly, Dallas to Houston service would accommodate primarily business customers calling on clients between the two downtowns. It would compete head-on with Business Class air travel in cost and comfort, and it would be faster than LUV for these travelers, having eliminated the need to transit through Love and Hobby.

Reply [▼ 1 reply](#) 1 0

**Noble Furr** 23 hours ago  
 I completely agree that Uber and Lyft and organizations like them pose a valuable solution to mobility in destination cities.

I also agree that portal-to-portal transportation in HSR would be competitive with the "hassle factor" of getting to the airport, parking, security, etc. I'm also hopeful TSA would not be in the mix anywhere, especially since trains can't be used as missiles.

Reply

0 0

**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Ironically, even building today wouldn't catch us up to other developed countries. Germany and China already operate the next generational technology -- maglev.

Reply

1 0

**Groking** 1 day ago

It's an investment in the future of this country that we surely need, but people are too selfish nowadays to do whats best for their children and grandchildren, etc... We decided that we don't want to invest in our own civilization anymore. Short-sighted greed heads and conservatives will make sure this never happens, as will the petroleum, automobile and air transport industries.

Reply

2 1

**lapedro** 2 days ago

big govt fantasy by the nutcase democrats

Reply

[▼ 1 reply](#)

3 7



**Kevin M** 2 days ago

Wow, look at that. You have internet access from your double wide. You're moving up in the world, lapedro.

Reply

4 2

**David Lethe** 2 days ago

Put it in writing that it is privately funded, require arbitration and fair market pricing for right-of-way when needed, and they can run trains wherever they want.

(But if anybody believes this won't require taxpayer dollars, then they are nuts).

Reply

[▼ 2 replies](#)

2 2



**Noble Furr** 1 day ago

David, I partially agree with you about government participation in such a development.

I think government assistance in right-of-way acquisition and the ability to issue bonds for financing would be enormously helpful. Otherwise, negotiations for right-of-way could last for generations.

But, other than safety assistance and inspections, I don't believe having government anywhere near the operations of HSR helpful, and I can only imagine government making union membership a requirement for employment with HSR - a serious and perhaps fatal flaw to the system.

Reply

0 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Right-of-way is always fair-market priced, at least, Some holdouts sue for considerably more.

Reply

1 0

**lapedro** 2 days ago

only democrats would be thinking of wasting money in such a way, and to build in california on the san andreas fault? are democrats trying to destroy this country, you bet they are

Reply

[▼ 1 reply](#)

3 4



**Kevin M** 2 days ago

Oh, don't strain your little uneducated brain on engineering issues and challenges along fault lines. Leave that concern to the college educated professionals...I believe they're known as "elitists" in the circles you march in.

Reply

3 1

**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

I'm sure that all sides can agree on one thing: The United States is incapable of building a high-speed rail network. It's when you start discussing the reasons why that all the squabbling begins.

In the US, a "high-speed rail project" has nothing to do with actually building or operating high-speed lines. It's ONLY about receiving government funds for "studies". Then, the public is flooded with doubts about the particular project (real or imagined), the lawsuits begin, and the lawyers move in to clean up. Once all of the money is expended, the project quickly dies a quiet death. A generation later - once everyone has forgotten about it, the project starts all over again from the beginning as if it's a brand-new idea and the cycle is repeated. Unfortunately that's the way it is. These Legal and Consulting firms have very powerful lobbyists that will keep it that way.

Reply

[▼ 3 replies](#)

2 1



**David Lethe** 2 days ago

Agreed. They never lead with a study where it simply says, is this economically viable without taxpayer subsidies.

Reply

[▼ 1 reply](#)

1 1



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

No overland transportation system exists without subsidies, including air. Even overland coach service operates on government highways.

Reply

1 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

In other words, we can put a man on the moon, but we can't build a transit system with technology that has been in operation for over half a century? Perhaps you're right, but California could be a game changer. If California gets a system built, and it's successful, other parts of the country will be clamoring for theirs.

Reply

1 0

**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

This project will cost \$3.74 TRILLION!!!! And that is just to lay the track if government can keep the cost at the low end, which you know they can't.

Then, you will have the cost of building stations, power supplies and maintenance facilities. Not to mention the ongoing costs of the upkeep to the before mentioned, employees, insurance, pensions, benefits, electricity and environmental reconstruction costs!!

So, with this being an over \$4 TRILLION dollar project on a government that already has to borrow \$.40 cents of every current operating dollar.....how much will this add to our national debt?? But that's ok, because progressives who claim to care so much about the children, sure don't seem to mind burdening all of our children with so much debt, that they cannot crawl out from under it.

Reply [▼10 replies](#) 1 6



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Irrelevant. It will never happen so you can relax.

Reply [▼5 replies](#)

2 0



**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

That's what they said about Obama's re-election!! Never underestimate the stupidity of progressives.....

Reply [▼4 replies](#)

1 1



**Dale Harwood** 1 day ago

If it was going to happen the required bills would have been passed prior to any public debate. Have you forgotten "we have to pass the (healthcare) bill to find out what's in it"?  
No, the consultants here have their money and want to get off the hook so they can move on. Hence the intense push to the media. They'll simply take the "study" they have, change a few names and numbers, and use it to collect government funds from the next "high-speed rail" project victims. There is not and never was any intention of building anything.  
Up next: Colorado/New Mexico, Minnesota, and Alberta, Canada.

Reply

0 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Unemployment is lower now than when Bush left office. Under Bush, there was a continual increase in the unemployment rate over 8 years, and no net increase in private sector jobs during that 8-year period.

Reply [▼2 replies](#)

1 0



**Noble Furr** 23 hours ago

That is not accurate. Bush received an economy in recession, and within a few years, managed to get to full employment. Private sector jobs and capacities did increase, and the stock market was doing great until the real estate bubble created by Democrats blew up, and almost wrecked our economy.

Bush also ushered in reforms to Medicare which made it more efficient, focused on prevention, and made prescription drugs cheaper for seniors who needed medications.

If you want to look for culprits for the economy going South on Bush, look no further than Chris Dodd, Barney Frank, Harry Reid, and Barack Obama.

Reply

0 0



**Ken Duble** 14 hours ago

Sorry, Noble, but if you're going to question my accuracy, you'll need to bring facts. During the 8 years Bush was in office, the lowest unemployment rate during that entire period was 4.2% in January 2001, the month Clinton left office. The highest was 7.8% in January 2009, the month Bush left office.

<http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>

Reply

0 0



**richard schumacher** 2 days ago

Your "!" key works fine but your calculator is broken. \$22 million per mile x 17 thousand miles = \$374 billion, about nine months' worth of this year's defense budget. Spending that amount over 10 or 20 years on high-speed rail would be an easy and prudent investment.

Reply [▼3 replies](#)

4 0



**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

Richard, thank you for pointing that out. I apologize for misleading the math, as it was not my intent. Trillions did seem a bit high and I should have redone the numbers.

So, it is perfectly OK to go ahead and borrow \$149.6 Billion more dollars to build an infrastructure that will never pay for itself??

Reply [▼2 replies](#)

1 2



**Dale Harwood** 1 day ago

If we're talking about highways, airports, or marine navigation, the answer is "Yes". Why must infrastructure pay for itself only if it runs on rails?

Reply

1 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Seybold claims to be sorry for misleading math, but on Jan. 8, he similarly posted an HSR cost estimate of \$52.58 trillion. That's like 62% of the GDP of the entire planet! In his case, misinformation seems to be the rule rather than the exception.

<http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/2014/01/u-s-transportation-secretary-gives-dallas-to-houston-high-speed-rail-yet-another-push.html/>

Reply

2 0



**James Horn** 2 days ago

A private firm has been established to develop a high speed rail system between Dallas & Houston that would be constructed using PRIVATE funds ! Anything than being strapped into a Sardine can and TOLD TO SIT, has gotta be better ! High Speed rail would encourage moving around and enjoy the trip !  
<http://www.texastribune.org/2013/10/09/politics-high-speed-rail/>

Reply [▼8 replies](#)

5 0



**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

If a private firm wants to take on the risk without involving the taxpayer.....I'm all for it. The moment the private firm asks for subsidies.....you know the plan is no longer worth the risk.

We have to quit privatizing profit and publicizing risk if you ever truly want to close the income equality gap!

Reply [7 replies](#)

1 2



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Once again, it doesn't matter. It's not going to happen. The oil, auto, and highway lobbyists are seeding the Tea party as we speak with false information and scare tactics. The consultants and lawyers will get paid for the studies and lawsuits and the project will die. This is the third repeat of the "Texas Triangle" proposal from the 1970's. It has a different name, but it will end in a couple of years once the funding for the "study" runs out. it will surface again in the 2030's under a different name with the same outcome.

Reply [1 reply](#)

3 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

While the smart money is with the cynics, one has to hope for a better tomorrow.

Reply

1 0



**Drew** 2 days ago

Who built the airports? Government  
Who pays for air traffic control? Government  
Who built the roads? Government

But rail has to do it all on it' own? Why would a private business man go up against industries that are subsidized without a subsidy?

Reply [3 replies](#)

5 2



**AdamsonScott1** 2 days ago

We have to stop somewhere! There's no reason why government has to be the one to build roads or airports.

PS: Ever heard of toll roads?

Reply [2 replies](#)

1 5



**Kevin M** 2 days ago

Toll roads?! So you'd rather pay upwards of \$40 per week to get to and from work and around town?! You'll moan about taxes but then, like a slobbering idiot, happily lock yourself in with tollways and have to pay astronomically more of your money to not drive on a freeway (taxes) in favor of driving on a tollway (bottomless pit leeching your checking account)?!!  
^The stupid is strong with this one.

Reply

3 1



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Toll roads are more expensive due to debt servicing. Highways can be pay-as-you go, and used to be in Texas.

Reply

1 0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Everything is subsidized. Highway travel is more subsidized than Amtrak, as Dale noted earlier.

Reply

1 0



**Eric Foster** 2 days ago

Can the right people get enough government money to virtually guarantee profitability is the only question in this deal.

If the right (far right?) politicians get enough of a cut of the deal, then it will pass.

The rest is all window dressing.

Reply

3 1



**Vincsophilly** 2 days ago

Texas has a great track record of harnessing the public and private sectors to get things done. Americans returning from Europe and Japan know how nice high speed rail can be. It's a very worthy infrastructure project. But I agree don't let it become Amtrak. Anyone who's used it on the Eastern seaboard knows that it is a bloated stepchild of the Fed aka the USPS.

Reply [1 reply](#)

3 2



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

Amtrak is essentially mid-20th century rail service on life support. HSR is totally different. It's faster and more convenient than air travel over distances of 250 to 750 miles.

Reply

1 0



**David Hardt** 2 days ago

I don't understand why our politicians can't work together and make high speed rail a reality. Our sky's are already overcrowded with plains. Our population keeps getting bigger, we will need more travel alternatives as our nation grows. Anyone who's been to Europe and Asia knows how much better rail travel is. We have the population, we have the resources we just need the will power do thing about our future!

Reply [11 replies](#)

4 2



**Matthew** 2 days ago

David, if government had gotten out of the way two decades ago, private builders would have built this by now. Many have tried, but the state said no. Now for some reason we're looking to government (remember Amtrak?) to build this?

Reply [3 replies](#)

3 3



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Food for thought: Amtrak covers 88% of its costs. Highways cover 51% of their costs.

Reply [2 replies](#)

3 0



**lapedro** 2 days ago

yea and the tooth fairy is real dale

Reply [1 reply](#) 1 3

**Ken Duble** 1 day ago  
You reply to facts and data with childish blathering?  
Reply 1 0

**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago  
A country that borrows \$.40 cents of every dollar it spends does not have the resources for a project of this magnitude.....or even a smaller one. On the low end, the cost to build HSR is \$22,000,000 per mile!! Now multiply that by 17,000 miles and tell me what you get?? The answer bright guy is \$3.74 TRILLION!!!! And that is just to lay the track if government can keep the cost at the low end, which you know they can't.  
Then, you will have the cost of building stations, power supplies and maintenance facilities. Not to mention the ongoing costs of the upkeep to the before mentioned, employees, insurance, pensions, benefits, electricity and environmental reconstruction costs!!  
Anyone who thinks the above idea is good for America.....HATES AMERICA!!! Because the idea above is a guaranteed recipe for financial collapse.....period.  
Reply [4 replies](#) 1 4

**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago  
Let's assume this project was for real.  
\$22 million per mile for high speed rail vs. \$40 million for a freeway is a better deal for the taxpayer. And virtually all of these freeways are being build as toll roads - many of which are owned by foreign entities. We are already in a state of financial collapse - and it has nothing to do with non-existent high-speed rail. Anyone who chases after ghosts and fear-mongering rather than attacking the real source of the problem (heavily subsidized roads, cars, and a political system so divided and corrupt that it can no longer function) are the real AMERICA HATERS.  
Reply [2 replies](#) 3 0

**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago  
I can agree with that.  
Reply 1 0

**Ken Duble** 1 day ago  
Don't assume for a moment his cost figures are real because they aren't, as I've shown above.  
One paradox for construction costs is they go lower as the system expands. Why? Because the first areas built are always the most densely populated places where both ridership and land costs are highest, Once you break out of the urban corridors and stretch across the hinterlands, costs plunge dramatically for both rail and highways.  
Reply 1 0

**Ken Duble** 1 day ago  
It took less than a second of Google search to show your data is false. A more accurate figure is \$10 million per mile. This is indeed 10x more than constructing highways. Of course, costs for both are a lot higher in densely populated areas.  
Annual maintenance costs would be \$152.5 million per rail mile compared to \$135.6 million per highway mile. The problem is, the figures considers maintenance only. They don't consider such costs as safety patrol, time lost due to congestion and pollution.  
[http://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/programs/eir-eis/statewide\\_techrpt\\_Cap\\_OPcost.pdf](http://www.hsr.ca.gov/docs/programs/eir-eis/statewide_techrpt_Cap_OPcost.pdf)  
Reply 1 0

**AdamsonScott1** 2 days ago  
"Our sky's are already overcrowded with plains"  
Is that why the rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain?  
Reply 1 1

**lapedro** 2 days ago  
you can't understand why politicians can't work together? please  
Reply 0 1

**Jodi Luepnitz** 2 days ago  
Another big government fantasy by the Democrats.  
Reply [17 replies](#) 3 7

**David Hardt** 2 days ago  
Jodi, this isn't a right or left issue. It's about the future of our nation.  
Reply [5 replies](#) 7 2

**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago  
Our nation was built on 150 year old+ locomotive technology!! There is a reason it is not the primary resource anymore. Progressives need to abandon all of their outdated concepts such as choo choo trains and unions. They had their time, and their time has passed.  
Reply [4 replies](#) 1 8

**Kevin M** 2 days ago  
Foolish person so proud of your aggressive ignorance. Are you enjoying this lovely Saturday morning off? Thank a UNION!  
Reply [1 reply](#) 7 1

**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago  
Unions love to take credit for the 5 day work week, but unfortunately your aggressive ignorance has overlooked the fact that it was a non-unionized Henry Ford that created the 5 day work week.  
Nice try though.....

Reply

1 1



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Anyone who uses "choo choo" obviously flunked kindergarten.

Reply

5 1



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

150 year old+ locomotive technology isn't under discussion.

Reply

1 0



**1DaIM** 2 days ago

Have you ever thought that freeways are the most extreme example of big government spending? So, every time you drive on a freeway, you are excepting big government subsidies, paid for primarily on debt.

Reply [▼ 8 replies](#)

4 1



**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

Fuel taxes from drivers provide more than enough money to pay for interstate highways if politicians had not moved them to the General Fund and continued to let them flow in the transportation departments coffers!!

But as soon as politicians (both sides) see a surplus of funds.....they have to spend it!! Which is why only a foolish sucker would advocate giving them one thin dime for anything.....

Reply [▼ 6 replies](#)

1 2



**1DaIM** 2 days ago

No they don't. Not even close. Not even remotely close. In fact, the total of all of the taxes collected at the pumps don't cover half of TxDOTs highway budget.  
<http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/library/reports/go/finance/afr2013.pdf>

The state fuel tax was capped at \$.09 per gallon in 1991. It wasn't indexed to inflation and hasn't risen a penny since. Meanwhile, average fuel efficiency for cars on the road has increased significantly, making the fuel tax make even less sense.

Reply [▼ 3 replies](#)

5 2



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Be careful presenting honest facts. That tends to confuse people.

Reply

2 1



**Darrell Seybold** 2 days ago

I was speaking of the federal fuel tax which is much higher, and as it relates to interstate highways. But, thanks for the incorrect state info! I have put a link to easy to read fact sheet that shows the state fuel tax at \$.20 per gallon.....

And how much does the state get from oil companies for the value of their extractions?? Isn't it much higher than what they shift to the consumer??

<http://tti.tamu.edu/group/stsc/files/2011/01/GasTax-BROCHURE.pdf>

Reply

2 1



**1DaIM** 2 days ago

Okay, you are correct. A whopping \$.20 per gallon.

But lets look at your data:

Did you see the little blurb that says "Seems pretty low"? That's because it is. Go to the next page. You spend more on your cell phone than you spend to have unlimited access to everywhere in the state by freeway. Do you know why the Pegasus Project go scrapped? Because TxDOT doesn't have the money. Do you know why 635 was sold to the Spanish? Because TxDOT doesn't have the money. Do you know why EVERY new highway in Texas is being planned as a toll way? Because TxDOT doesn't have the money.

Right now, the current gas taxes don't even cover the current costs to fund TxDOTs maintenance of current liabilities (the existing roads). That's why TxDOT is floating the idea of the "Turn Back", where they off-load their existing liabilities to municipalities instead of having to keep their promises and maintain the infrastructure they built.

The exact price wasn't my point. My point was that the gas tax hasn't been raised in over 20 years, hasn't been sufficient to pay for the states needs in a very long time, and the revenue is dropping due to increased fuel efficiency. And there is a slowly growing group of drivers that pay no gas taxes at all -EV drivers. If even 5% of drivers go EV, then TxDOT as we know it is toast.

Reply

2 1



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Actually no Darrell. When you look at cost-recovery, freeways cover only 51% of their costs. Even Amtrak does much better than that at an 88% cost-recovery.

Reply

5 1



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

This isn't true in Texas. Most funding for new roads is borrowed. Texas now spends more on debt servicing for roads than it spends on construction.

<http://www.examiner.com/article/lawmakers-taking-texas-off-fiscal-cliff-with-road-debt>

Reply

2 0



**AdamsonScott1** 2 days ago

"excepting"?

Reply

2 1



**Kevin M** 2 days ago

Reagan is dead...and he isn't coming back. So lay off the 1980s rhetoric. You have NO IDEA how much good the government does in your daily life that you ignorantly

take for granted. Think very, very carefully before you wish to hand all power to private corporations. There was a time just last century when corporations did whatever they wanted to do...and it wasn't all kittens and rainbows. With the government, as flawed as it can be, at least YOU, the citizen, has the power to change things. You have no such recourse with corporations. Do not give up your power.

[Reply](#)

4   2



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

Fantasy yes. But to offload the blame onto one political party or the other is pure ignorance.

[Reply](#)

1   0



**Bill** 2 days ago

As it is to be edxpected, the (R) boys are saying it can't be done and the (D) boys are defending it. This is a very usual situtation in ANYTHING involving money and certain people will be fighting with hand and feet as it would impact their making money, SWA shut down the last propasal and you know that the oil and gas industry would loose cash if it went through and they couldn't line the pockets of the congressmen to fight it from that angle

[Reply](#)

[▼ 2 replies](#)

6   1



**Dale Harwood** 2 days ago

The opposition you mention will happen whether the system is publicly or privately funded. In fact, the propaganda campaign has already been fed to the Tea Party. As for SWA, they're apparently smart enough to understand this is nothing more than a study-scam and there is no honest intention of ever building or operating anything.

[Reply](#)

2   0



**Ken Duble** 1 day ago

U.S. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) worked against the interests of his own state to prevent OKC from developing a light rail transit. Tom Delay even pulled rail funding for Houston out a bill and nobody found out until after the fact.

[Reply](#)

2   0

#### Footer Navigation

[Site Map](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Site Tutorial](#)

©2013, The Dallas Morning News Inc. All Rights Reserved.