



dallasnews OPINION

Powered by *The Dallas Morning News*

86° FORECAST TRAFFIC



Editorial: Boost for Texas bullet-train project

21 13 0 Share 1 14 AA

Published: 21 August 2013 07:59 PM
Updated: 21 August 2013 08:23 PM

A single addition to the staff of a Texas bullet-train enterprise packs a potent message to North Texas that the project means business and isn't a California-style pipe dream.

Tom Schieffer, former Texas Rangers president and ambassador to Japan and Australia, has joined the Texas Central High-Speed Railway as a senior adviser, company president Robert Eckels, former Harris County judge, told this newspaper.

The privately financed company aims to start 205 mph rail service between Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston as early as 2021.

The Japan part of Schieffer's résumé is key: The Texas-based company is affiliated with the Central Japan Railway, a leader in rail technology and operator of the bullet train that serves Tokyo and Osaka.

Schieffer's role includes helping line up investors for the \$10 billion Texas project and bridging differences in business practices in the two nations. His Fort Worth roots are intended to calm officials on the western side of the metro area who have been clamoring to make sure the train line serves not just Dallas, but Fort Worth and D/FW Airport passengers as well.

Much about the Texas bullet train project sets it apart from beleaguered ventures that banked on government funding. California's proposed \$68 billion project, for example, is drawing on voter-approved bonds and billions from Washington, yet it is struggling to make deadlines and stay within budget.

The Texas Central High-Speed Railway is not a government creation but a business. It's operating on private capital that wants a U.S. demonstration project for proven Japanese bullet-train technology.

The goal is connecting two major population centers about 250 miles apart, the optimum distance for competing with air service and highway travel.

Enter the Dallas-Houston route and Texas' reputation for a friendly business climate. Eckels says an investment-grade market study indicates that the Texas route would be profitable.

The Texas bullet train would be routed mostly on right-of-way controlled by freight rail, TxDOT or utility companies. Some private land would have to be acquired, and the railroad would have power of eminent domain if business negotiations failed.

The company envisions profiting from development around downtown depots near existing transit hubs, such as the Union Station stop on DART's light rail. For passengers boarding in Dallas, trains would leave about every 30 minutes during peak hours. Fares would be pegged to 70 to 80 percent of the cost of air travel.

Selling points for the 90-minute trip to Houston: no weather delays, no security lines or government pat-downs, full use of computer devices, handy parking, rental cars at the other end. (It sounds so dreamy we'd like to save up reasons to go to Houston.)

There's clearly a long way to go for this project, and the biggest test will be raising prodigious amounts of capital. Meanwhile, civic and government leaders should work mightily to prove up this state's reputation for innovation and get the nation's first bullet-train passengers boarded in Texas.

Behind the operation

Company: Texas Central High-Speed Railway

Affiliation: Central Japan Railway, operating more than 300 trains daily between Tokyo and Osaka

Goal: Bullet-train service between Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston

Target start date: 2021

Technology: N700-I Shinkansen bullet train

Speed and travel time: 205 mph, for a 90-minute Dallas-Houston trip


Fare: 70 to 80 percent of the cost of air travel


Next step: Company will file intent this year to conduct an environmental impact statement with Federal Railroad Administration on route options.

Did you see something wrong in this story, or something missing? [Let us know.](#)

Comments

To post a comment, log into your chosen social network and then add your comment below. Your comments are subject to our [Terms of Service](#) and the privacy policy and terms of service of your social network. If you do not want to comment with a social network, please consider writing a [letter to the editor](#).


 Login to post a comment

Login    ... 




[Post](#)

14 Comments




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

-  **Berlinda** 1 hour ago




Stupid. Build a hyperloop.

[Reply](#) 0  
-  **Crabcake Girl** 2 hours ago




No TSA patdowns? I think that's unrealistic optimism. The surveillance state is here, folks. I'm sure that the TSA can find some perfectly reasonable sounding justification to make us take our shoes off and put us through a strip and a scanner.

[Reply](#) [▼ 1 reply](#) 0  
-  **James Thomas** 44 minutes ago

Spoken like a woman who would rather die on a hijacked plane crashed into a building..




[Reply](#) 0  
-  **Greg Davis** 2 hours ago

I'm all for the project as long as taxpayers aren't asked to finance it.




[Reply](#) 0  
-  **David Lethe** 2 hours ago

Just wait until some union goons call their buddies at the EPA and complain that Texas is a right-to-work state and not enough union labor is involved. The permits will be cancelled and there will be so many environmental impact study requirements that the project will halt faster than you can say "oil pipeline to Canada".




I really would like this project happen ... but just can't see how they get around the Democrats and their Union labor ties.

[Reply](#) -2  
-  **enderjed** 10 hours ago

Hyperloop or GTFO!

[Reply](#) +2  
-  **Daniel Templeton** 10 hours ago

Living in China since 2004, I have experienced the transition from typical rail service to high speed rail. I have taken 2 hour trips which were 4 hour trips and 4 hour trips that use to be 8 hour trips. I would locate the headend in DFW airport area, push the train to Houston with a side to Austin or by Austin and into the city. I see no real need for Dallas to Fort worth. Cost is another factor with so many airport legs like Longview and Tyler to Houston and then to Dallas. Still, the big job will be to get Texans out of their cars and into anything.

[Reply](#) [▼ 1 reply](#) 0  
-  **Anne Lindsey** 2 hours ago

There has been talk for years about looping regular rail around the college towns: Waco,