

Getting it Done

Building High-Speed Passenger Rail in America



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ASSOCIATION



For more than 125 years, APTA has been the leading voice for bus and rail transportation in America. More than 90 percent of passengers using public transportation are carried by APTA members. In addition, APTA's business members include large and small companies with international expertise in financing, construction, maintenance, supply and operation of rail systems worldwide.



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America is poised to take the most significant step toward transforming its transportation network since the Interstate Highway System was begun more than 50 years ago. And just as that vision led to a system of highways that was the envy of the world and an economic engine for America, the nation is embarking on an ambitious plan that will lead to a network of high-speed rail corridors that will support millions of jobs, help revitalize our economy and improve mobility for millions of Americans.

Building on the rail renaissance currently underway in America, the U.S. will advance new express high-speed corridors, develop existing and emerging regional high-speed corridor services, and upgrade reliability and service on conventional intercity and commuter rail services. This will yield immediate results and will put the nation on track for high-speed corridor development in the coming decades.

Investing in **environmentally friendly** and **energy-efficient** high-speed rail will:

- **Create jobs** and **boost productivity** through highly skilled jobs in the transportation industry, and revitalize

domestic industries supplying transportation products and services. Upgrading freight and passenger operations on newly revitalized tracks, bridges and rights of way is spurring business productivity along all corridors. Employment growth in a domestic rail industry will be a key component of America's economic future, providing hundreds of thousands of forward-looking, green collar jobs.

- **Reduce the nation's dependency on foreign oil** while keeping billions of dollars in the U.S. economy; decrease greenhouse gas emissions; help meet national and international climate change goals; and improve air quality.
- **Mitigate congestion, improve connectivity** and provide **travel choices**. The U.S. population is expected to grow by 50 percent between 2000 and 2050. The population growth is creating mega-regions that will not prosper unless they can be freed from the stranglehold of highway and airport congestion. At the same time, rural and small urban communities will benefit from the increased transfer points and the feeder services connecting with new high-speed rail corridors.

Getting it built.

Implementing this ambitious undertaking requires innovation and expertise.

- **Planning.** Through careful planning, a national network of high-speed rail corridors will maximize the capacity and efficiency of the nation's transportation network (rail, highway, aviation, and other modes) and unify regions of the nation.
- **Financing.** Development of a national high-speed rail network requires a financial commitment from federal and state governments. Innovative financing solutions including private sector resources will be needed that go beyond the traditional public transportation funding sources.
- **Partnership.** Multi-use rail lines and private ownership of many lines – two factors that set the U.S. apart from many other nations with high-speed rail – compel the need to understand and negotiate partnerships with freight rail operators, as well as state, local and regional governments.
- **Standards.** Safety and operational standards must be developed, adopted, and updated to reflect the particular geography, operational characteristics, and intermodal realities of America's transportation network. Specific areas that must be addressed include positive train control, sealed corridors, interoperability, equipment specifications, joint procurement program possibilities, and shared corridor operations.
- **Advocacy.** The federal government is a key partner. In addition, successful high-speed rail corridors must have effective advocates on the ground, at city hall, and in statehouses as well as in the halls of Congress.
- **Information sharing.** While technology speeds ahead and new corridors reflect the particular realities of their geography, demographics, and shared corridor usage, now is the time to build upon international experiences. Understanding the successes and challenges of systems elsewhere in the world will allow U.S. corridors to advance quickly and successfully.



Getting it right.

Fortunately, America has no shortage of creativity and experience that can make this vision a reality, and get it done.

- For two decades, the **High Speed Ground Transportation Association** (HSGTA) with its more than 500 members served as the leading advocate for high-speed rail in America. Now integrated into the **American Public Transportation Association** (APTA), the legacy members of HSGTA work through its high-speed and intercity rail committee, the legislative committee and other forums to provide expertise and leadership on development and operation of effective, efficient and safe high-speed rail programs.
- APTA is working closely with groups including the **American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials** (AASHTO) and the **States for Passenger Rail** organization on a variety of fronts to tackle the issues involved in launching high-speed rail in a comprehensive manner, and in expanding it in the years ahead.
- APTA, the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Academies, and other nonprofit organizations partner to conduct **research, development and standard-setting** in critical industry areas and to widely disseminate research in areas as broad as surveys on climate change policy, and as focused as signal system engineering and workforce development. These activities have helped set in place industry standards and regulations for equipment safety, signal systems, track standards, procurement procedures, operating standards, and workforce development and training.
- In the arena of **planning**, APTA and other industry associations are working with the **Federal Railroad Administration** (FRA) to develop a National Rail Plan as called for by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA).
- Implementation of a vibrant national rail program will require that we identify solutions to a interconnected set of issues, including an appropriate regulatory environment, uses of right of way, reasonable limits on liability, and other issues that will facilitate the growth of rail. The experience of APTA and others in **advocacy and negotiation** will help new corridors tackle these issues effectively and efficiently.
- **National conferences** such as APTA's Rail Conference and Annual Meeting, and workshops and programs specific to high-speed rail provide valuable opportunities for the international exchange of ideas, sharing of research, and showcasing cutting-edge services and products. APTA is collaborating with the **International Union of Railways (UIC)** to draw upon best practices from international operators covering rational station planning, safe trackage and yards, easy transfer among transportation modes, and creation of transit-oriented developments at or near stations.



President Barack Obama, introducing his vision for high-speed rail on April 16, 2009

*“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...”*

*It is happening right now.
It's been happening for decades.
The problem is it's been happening
elsewhere, not here.”*

A Blueprint for High-Speed Rail



Continuing its work as an international leader in research, standard-setting, information-sharing, and advocacy, APTA is advocating vigorously for high-speed passenger rail. The following policy principles that have been adopted by the APTA Executive Committee are among those that should guide the evolving national program for high-speed rail:

- Establish a national rail plan bolstered by supportive federal policies. This includes an up-to-date national rail passenger system map that builds upon existing intercity and commuter rail networks and incorporates new and emerging corridors in the years ahead.
- Develop and adhere to an orderly process for high-speed rail development with input from national, state, and regional levels. The program should follow the structure established by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), as affirmed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009



(ARRA). It should encompass the structure announced by President Obama that identifies ready-to-go projects, programs for developing corridors, and programs that are in the initial planning stages. This approach reflects high-speed rail express services (in excess of 150 mph) as well as recognizes high-speed rail regional (110-150 mph), emerging (90-110 mph), and conventional (79-90 mph) rail.

- Support funding for high-speed rail as a part of an overall transportation vision that includes an integrated and interconnected set of travel choices, including bus, rail, highways and aviation. A process must be defined for considering additional corridors as well as expansion of existing corridors. The ongoing program should be supported through a federal high-speed and intercity rail passenger account to be funded through dedicated revenues, with key segments of the system prioritized and funded through a federal process involving multi-year contract authority.
- Encourage station locations in higher-density, transit-oriented developments to enhance livable community needs, ensure interconnectivity with regional rail and bus networks, airports and other modes, and improve the bottom line of all transportation providers and services.
- Work to establish industry-wide standards for infrastructure, equipment, system, and operations that will help maintain high-speed rail's enviable safety record.
- Recognize the ability of high-speed rail investment to sustain and enhance services for all railroad hosts, and – reflecting the reality of shared corridor operation in the United States – support an equitable and fair process for negotiating passenger rail operational access and liability terms and limits as an integral component of high-speed rail development.

Information on high-speed rail, including APTA's policy principles on high-speed rail corridors and intercity passenger rail service and its four-point advocacy agenda for financing intercity and high-speed rail can be found at

www.apta.com



High-speed rail corridors designated by the Federal Railroad Administration as of September 18, 2009.

Photos courtesy of Amtrak, International Union of Railways, Alstom Transportation, and the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Photo of President Obama courtesy of White House Photo/Chuck Kennedy.

