

High Speed Rail In North America

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2010 RAIL CONFERENCE

- “Rail is cheaper, safer, and better on every single count”.
- “But the cost isn’t really the point anyway”

Support for HSR in North America

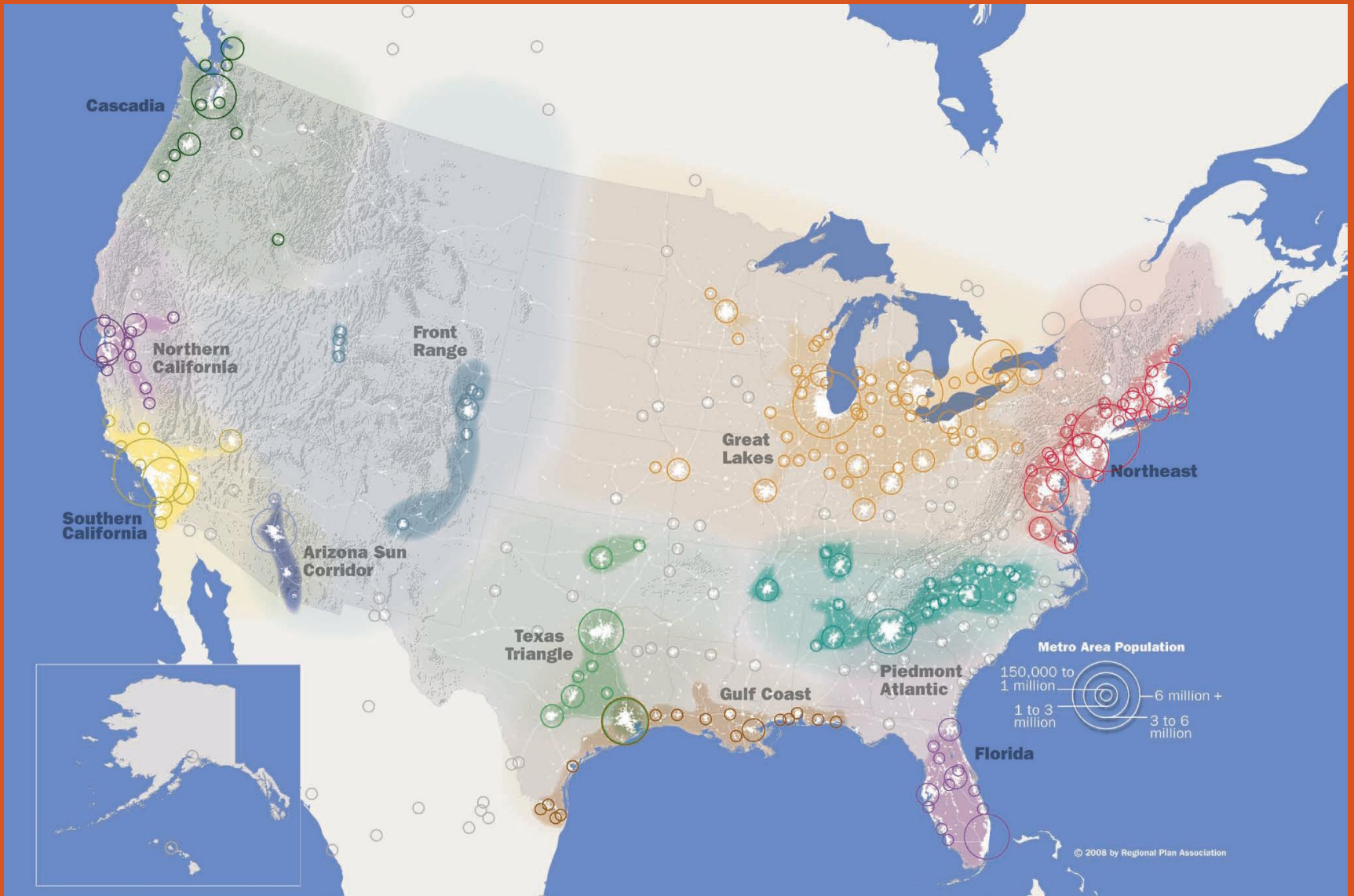
- February 2009 President Obama signs American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)
 - • \$8 B allocated/\$103 B requested
 - • February 2009 Canada's Conservative Government supports HSR Toronto-Montreal

An Oft seen argument

- The case for high speed rail is compelling:
 - It can provide considerable additional rail capacity, which forecasts show will be sorely needed in the future
 - High speed rail can deliver a step-change improvement in journey times
 - It is an environmentally-sustainable solution to the country's transport needs
 - By providing effective links between city regions and international gateways, high speed rail can boost economic development in the Midlands, the North and Scotland.

Criteria for HSR Markets

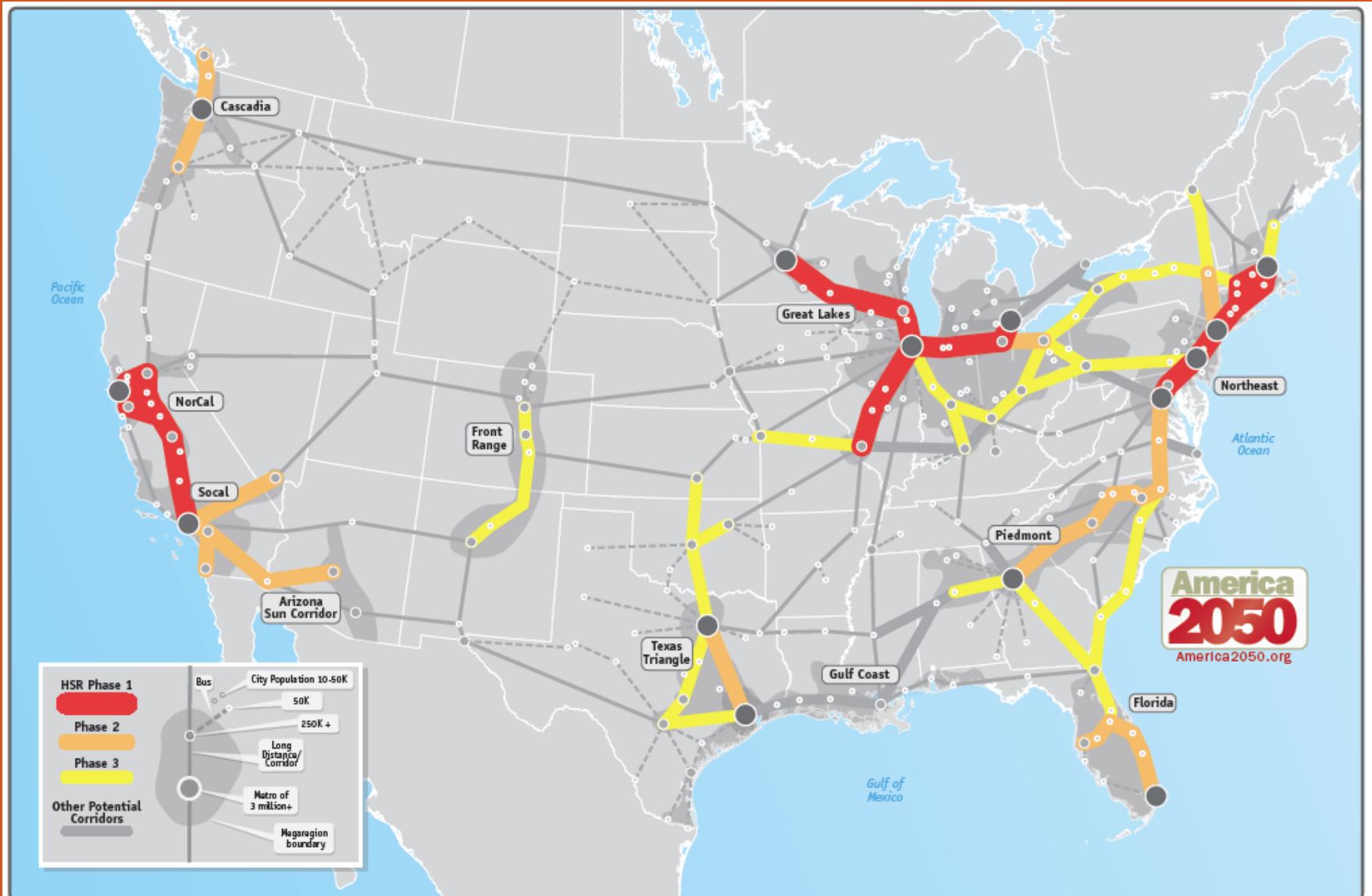
- Metropolitan size: > 2.5 million each
- Distance: 100-500 miles
- Transit connections: access
- Economic productivity
- Congestion (regional)
- Performance of alternatives



HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR DESIGNATIONS



HSR Phasing Plan



Benefit Arguments for HSR

- Alleviating highway and airport congestion
- Environmental and energy improvements
- Promoting economic development
- Improve transportation safety
- Providing choice
- Improve system reliability

Cost Issues

- Two infrastructure options
 - Upgrading existing track, signaling systems, and equipment (\$7 Million / mile)
 - Building new rail lines enabling trains to travel at much higher speeds - \$35 million/mile
- Operating costs
 - Labour costs 50% of costs – labour laws (1900)
 - How to ensure efficiency (concessions?)

Summary

- opportunity costs- any \$ spent on Intercity transportation cannot be spent on Urban transportation, where the real problems are
- The US carries a greater share of freight by rail than Europe. Converting rights-of-way into passenger only (which is required for HSR) may cost some of that freight share

Summary

- The strategic response of competing modes is rarely if ever considered, the costs are therefore underestimate
- Our roads are almost universally high quality and ubiquitous. "We've chosen to sink our transportation investments into the automobile – we just price it incorrectly- the last 10 mile problem
- 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.

And to Conclude

“Yes, it's better to take a high-speed train than to fly. It would be better still not to have to make the journey at all, and to have some peace and stillness in our lives. And it would be better to have an honest, informed discussion about high-speed rail, rather than a wild guess based on unfounded assumptions and dodgy figures.” quote from UK not US or Canada



Thank you – enjoy Vancouver

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