

High Speed Rail: What it Means to Amtrak

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Presentation Outline

- Summarize definitions related to High/Higher Speed Rail (HSR) internationally and domestically.
- Discuss the characteristics that most users mean when discussing HSR.
- Share Amtrak's perspective on HSR.
- Describe the resources Amtrak brings to the development of HSR.
- Some friendly cautions.
- Closing & Questions.



So, what exactly is HSR?

- According to the International Union of Railways (UIC), HSR is defined as:
 - Passenger services operating at least 133mph on existing lines, and 155mph on purpose-built alignments.
 - Using the UIC definition, the USA doesn't currently have HSR, although Acela blurs the definition.
 - For the purposes of the stimulus funding, the Federal Railroad Administration, defines HSR as services on routes of 100-600 miles “reasonably expected” to achieve 110mph.



What Passengers, Citizens & Voters Mean by HSR

Q: What does the average rider, or potential rider, want from HSR; what do they really mean?

A: Frequency
Travel Time Reduction
Reliability

These outcomes can be achieved through sustained and targeted investments in conventional services.



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Therefore, Amtrak's Perspective on HSR is...

- * As evidenced by the presence of ~10,700 miles of HSR trackage worldwide, it's a highly valuable tool.
- * HSR can assist countries/regions achieve land use, emissions reduction, transit, and economic development goals.
- As America's passenger rail network matures, Amtrak's goal is to be integrally involved in this process.
- However, as a nation, we're decades and many billions behind, but improving existing trains is the place to start...



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What Does Amtrak Bring to the Development of HSR?

By virtue of its national intercity network, fleet, access to the nation's railroads, and operating experience, Amtrak brings a wealth of resources to states, and other partners, as they develop higher/high speed services.

Allow me to deconstruct...



Amtrak's National Network



Amtrak's Intercity Fleet

- ~1,700 cars
- ~469 locomotives
- Three (3) heavy repair shops
- Servicing facilities nationwide
- Generally, Amtrak's fleet is old and heavily utilized, but its existence provides some opportunities to expand services.
- Rebuilt equipment is no substitute for new rolling stock, which is desperately needed.



Statutory Access to Host Railroads



- Right or wrong, in the USA, intercity trains share, and will generally continue sharing, alignments owned by freight/commuter carriers.
- Amtrak's ability to access these routes and provide liability protection provides substantial savings to states.

Operating Expertise



- Experience operating in mixed traffic environments.
- Knowledge of maintaining tracks at Class 8 standards.
- Experience with Positive Train Control, cab signaling, and other technologies.
- Amtrak is a railroad—it owns, operates, and maintains infrastructure and equipment.
- Construction and project management experience; skilled workforce.

A Friendly Reality Check...

- \$13B is a wonderful start and represents a dramatic change in policy, but it does not “buy” true HSR.
- The HSR systems we envy, have been developed following a program of sustained and adequate public investment in existing services.
- Issues of Amtrak aside, there is no escaping the need for public investment—Americans will have to accept that, just like we have for roads, airports, and transit.
- Investments will pay dividends for generations, but there is much to be done—patience is essential; the highways were not built overnight.



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Thank You & All Aboard!



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