

## High-Speed Rail to Modernize Transportation

The future of high-speed rail (HSR) in North America remains a complex and highly debated issue.

It is well known that the United States and Canada lag the significant high-speed rail investments seen in Europe and Asia. In North America, the only passenger line that comes close is Amtrak's Acela line, but even those trains top out at 150 mph, short of the minimum 155 mph (200 km/h) that defines "high-speed."

High-speed rail would transform how we move between major economic centers in North America. Imagine how economic opportunities could grow, and ease of connectivity would improve, if you could get from Vancouver to Seattle, or from Las Vegas to Southern California, in less time than driving and with more convenience than flying.

The construction and operation of HSR systems would create thousands of jobs. They could boost local economies by making regions more accessible, attracting tourism, and promoting business travel. HSR can also bolster ridership as transit-savvy users connect to local public transport services to complete their journeys.

While the above benefits are exciting to imagine, the biggest issue, among many, continues to be funding. High-speed rail in other parts of the world was constructed with massive investments from governments that made it a national priority. Unlike countries in Europe and Asia that upgraded existing passenger rail lines, North American HSR developers would need to purchase large swaths of private land and construct brand new rail lines that may parallel existing corridors.

Critics argue that the funds needed for construction and maintenance could be better spent on other transportation projects, such as improving existing public transit systems and traditional rail infrastructure.

Through UITP, we have opportunities to learn from our colleagues who have experience with high-speed and other types of passenger rail. Any decision on HSR in North America will need to balance the promise of modern transportation with the practical realities of implementation and funding. Whether or not HSR is the answer for North America, we can rely on UITP to provide successful examples of public transport, in all forms.



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