

High Speed Rail Questions and Answers

Q: Doesn't the United States already have a high speed rail system?

A: No. The Amtrak Acela travels at an average speed of 83 mph between Washington, DC and New York City, and only 66 mph between NYC and Boston. This is well below standard compared to other systems around the world.

Q: How does Acela compare to high speed trains in Europe and Japan?

A: By world standards, Acela does not qualify as a high speed train.

- **The new French AGV has an average speed of 200 mph.**
- **The slowest Japanese Bullet train has an average speed of 125 mph.**

Q: How can we boost Acela's speed?

A: The troubled Acela train needs to be replaced with a modern high speed train. More importantly, the Northeast Corridor infrastructure from Washington to New York needs to be upgraded to accommodate higher speeds.

Q: Can the current infrastructure handle high speed service?

A: Establishing high speed rail in the Northeast Corridor will require some infrastructure improvements:

- **Physical separation of high speed trains from lower speed commuters and freights.**
- **Construction of overpasses and underpasses to eliminate mixing of high and lower speed train traffic.**
- **New tunnels in Baltimore and New York, and several new bridges.**
- **Elimination of some curves.**
- **Replacement of aging catenary (overhead electric wires).**
- **Modern stations to handle increased ridership.**

Q: Is Amtrak capable of performing this work?

A: No, according to Amtrak's own president, Alexander Kummant. Mr. Kummant has testified before Congress that asking Amtrak to undertake this effort would be like asking a local town highway department to build an interstate.

Q: If Amtrak cannot undertake this effort, who can?

A: The private sector. America has some of the best railroad engineering and construction companies in the world.

Q: Wouldn't this hurt Amtrak's workforce?

A: No. All Amtrak employees will be protected by law and existing collective bargaining agreements. The United Transportation Union has already endorsed this concept.

Q: How would the high speed rail legislation work?

A: The U.S. Department of Transportation would solicit proposals to finance, design, build and operate high speed rail. The proposals would be reviewed by a commission of Northeast governors and mayors, Amtrak, rail labor and other experts. DOT would then submit the recommended proposal to Congress.

Q: Would any private financing be available for the project?

A: Yes. Private investors helped finance Virgin Trains in Britain, Taiwan High Speed Rail, and many other projects around the world. Private investors are financing construction of Desert Express, a high speed train from Las Vegas to Victorville, CA.