



Congestion: A national network of passenger rail will ease traffic congestion

Highway congestion is bad, and only getting worse.

- Since 1982, the average delay per highway rush hour traveler has tripled to almost 50 hours per year. (Source: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, presentation by Dr. Anthony Kane, Jan. 22, 2007, “A new vision for the future Interstate system.”)
- The 65 million vehicles on U.S. highways in 1955 are today 246 million, and will be 400 million by the year 2055. (Source: AASHTO, February 2007, “Transportation: Invest in our Future.”)

Roadway congestion is not limited to urban areas.

- According to AASHTO studies cited above, interstate travel is currently one-quarter of vehicle miles traveled, is the fastest growing segment of vehicle miles traveled, and is bursting at the seams. AASHTO expects that by 2020, 90 percent of urban interstates will be at or exceeding capacity.

The skies are also congested.

- The increases in air traffic that characterized the 1990s (temporarily diminished post 9-11) have returned and by the end of 2006 surpassed prior records – with growth continuing. The 63 million take-offs and landings in 2007 will grow to 81.1 million by 2020, and the 60% increase in private flying hours will further tax capacity. (Source: “FAA Aerospace Forecasts: Fiscal Years 2007-2020,” “FAA Forecasts Steady Growth in Air Travel Demand,” March 15, 2007 press release of Federal Aviation Administration.)
- A flight from Philadelphia to Los Angeles that took 5 hours and 5 minutes 40 years ago today takes just over 6 hours. Schedule padding by airlines is in response to increased congestion, higher fuel prices (and consequent slower cruising speeds) and outdated air traffic control systems that more than offset the efficiency gains of the modern airplane equipment itself. (Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, “Farther, faster? Not Anymore,” by Paul Nussbaum, April 23, 2007. Wall Street Journal, “Why Flights are Getting Longer,” by Scott McCartney, May 29, 2007.)

- Regional air service is among the fastest-growing segments of air travel. (Source: "FAA Aerospace Forecasts: Fiscal Years 2007-2020," U.S. Department of Transportation) Yet corridors of 100-500 miles serve distances where rail corridors are particularly competitive. Unlike air, passenger rail capacity can be easily increased by adding cars to existing trains.