

Investing in High Speed Rail

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The Fiscal year 2012 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act includes a provision that would strip key funding for investments in High Speed Rail. This provision would cripple the efforts in California to develop a 21st Century transportation system, and I joined with a number of my colleagues in opposing the bill on the House floor. My comments are below:

“The Majority appears proud to say they are offsetting the funds needed to help our citizens in the Midwest recover from the storms and floods that have devastated their communities. But what the Majority is doing is really not something be proud of. The Majority is offsetting jobs and offsetting investments into our nation’s infrastructure. Put bluntly, Mr. Chairman, with this bill the Majority is offsetting our nation’s future.”

This bill would specifically rescind \$68 million dollars intended for the Next Generation Passenger Rail Equipment Purchase in my state of California. During these difficult economic times, rescinding these funds would result in the loss of as many as 1,892 jobs.

How is it possible for every other industrialized country, and many emerging economies, to afford state-of-the-art high speed rail systems and claim that the world’s richest country cannot?

The emerging economic engines in Europe and Asia are rapidly overtaking the US. They move people to work and products to the market more efficiently. China invested over \$80 billion in high speed rail last year alone, over \$1 trillion in the last decade, completing over 7,500 kilometers of their planned 13,000 kilometer system in just 9 years. The EU’s dozen lines are similarly successful, and Japan is also expanding its system dramatically. Many of those systems are now operated profitably by private companies.

Let’s not forget, Californians voted for \$9.95 billion for this project in 2008, a major reason over \$3.7 billion in federal funding has been granted for our state’s starter project. Those funds, with the President’s FY2012 budget proposal and private investments in discussion, could kick-start the Silicon Valley extension, the first major job destination for California’s system.”