High Speed Rail Alliance
Webinar, 30 September 2026

How High-Speed Rail Is Transforming Transportation: International Case Studies and Lessons for U.S. Policymakers

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A popular Chinese saying states:

"If you want to get rich, build roads first"

It emphasizes the importance of infrastructure, particularly transportation, in facilitating trade, connecting communities, and therefore creating economic growth opportunities. It also highlights the value of relationships and connections in building wealth.



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Francis Ford Coppola (2024)

Megalopolis

An integrated economic urban complex – created by fusion of multiple cities connected by high-speed transportation of 200-300 km/h (Sussman, 2011)

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The premise

- **Since 1964 with the Shinkansen in Japan (bullet train), HSR** deployment has played an important **role in reshaping travel patterns** and **activities of people**, consequently **changing the ways cities develop**.

- Motivations to develop HSR systems for many countries are:

  … not only:

  - Increasing transport infrastructure capacity
  - Providing a “green” transport alternative

  … but also:

  - **Promoting economic growth and regional development**

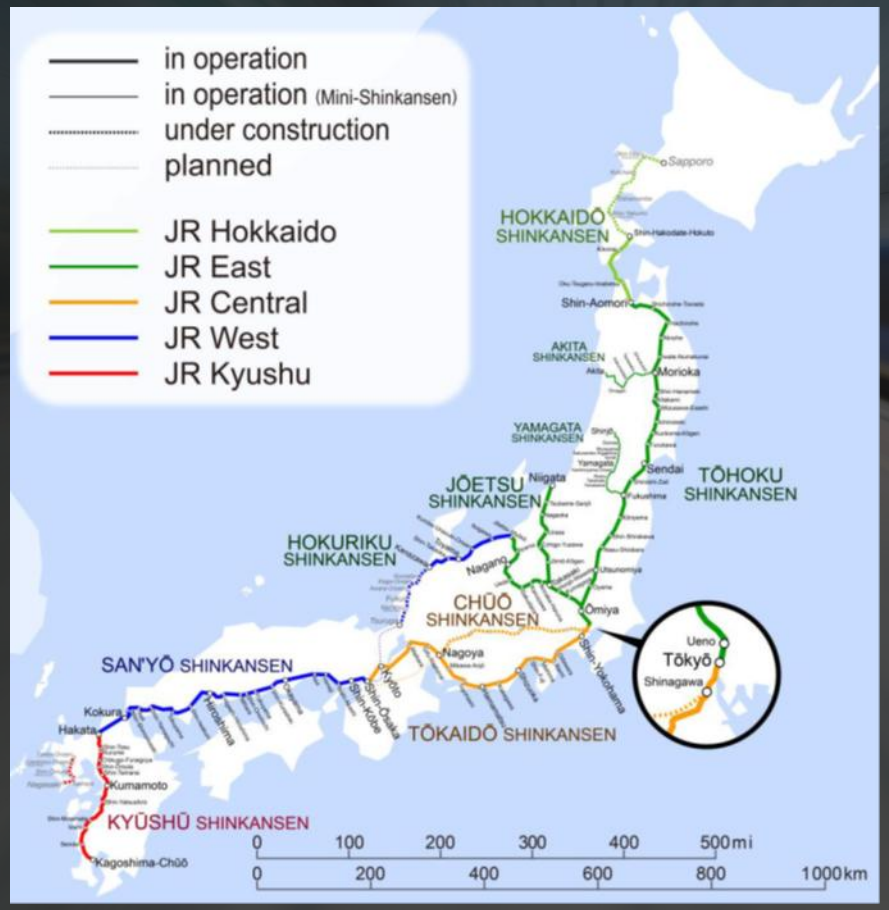


Source: Korres et al. (2017)

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The premise

Japan's HSR Shinkansen has a network of 2,764.6 km of lines with speeds of 240-320 km/h.



Source: Kato (2022)

- **Annual Ridership: 99,332 Ml pax-km**
- **Stations: 92**
- **Average delay per trip: less than 1 min**

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The premise

Impacts on regional economy

❑ Shinkansen has significantly improved interurban accessibility

E.g. Tokyo-Osaka (approx. 500km)

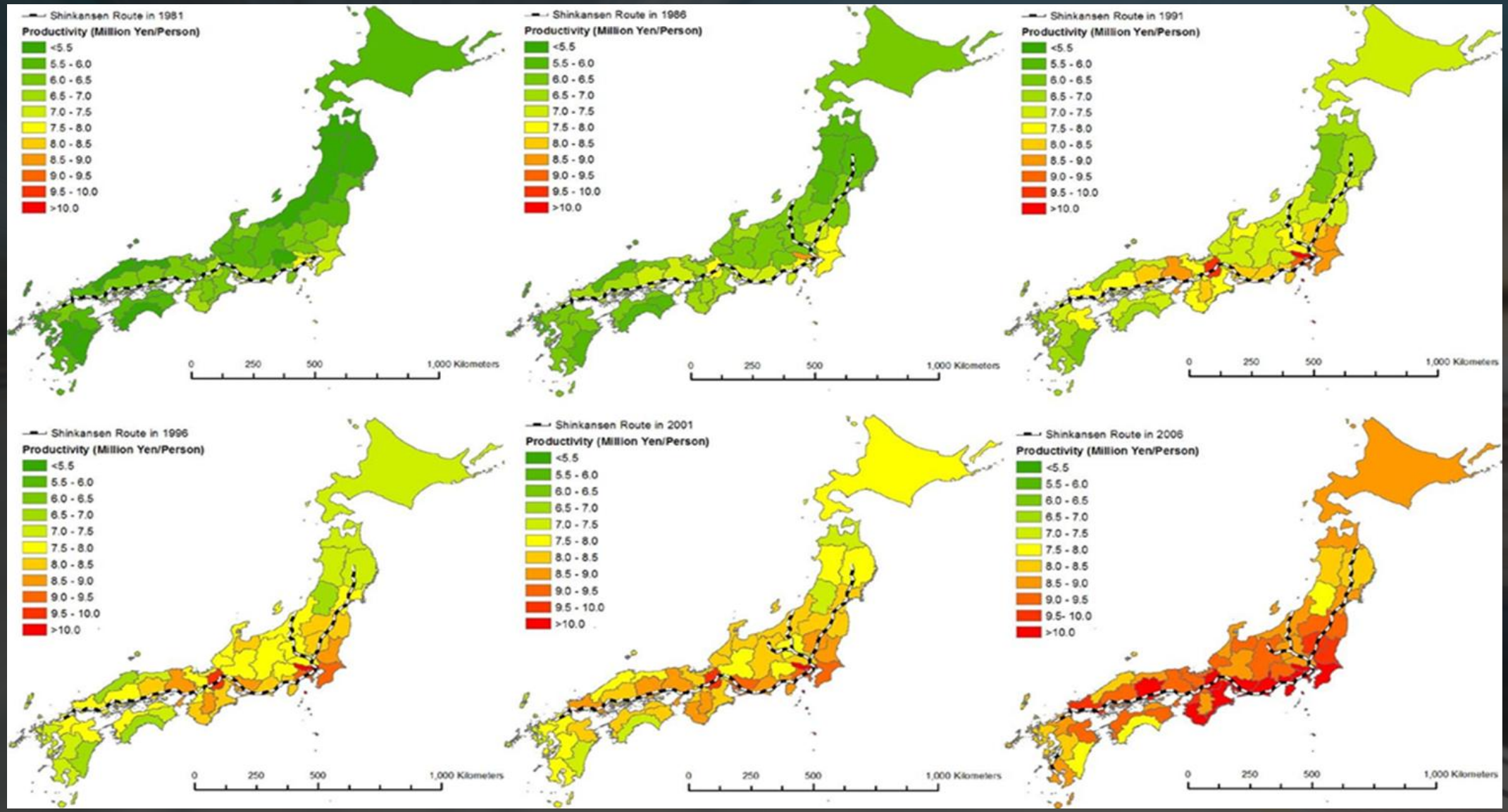
6h30mins (1963) → 3h10mins (1964) → 2h23mins (2026)

❑ **Shinkansen development has brought positive impacts on regional economies**

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The premise

Shinkansen impacts on productivity



Source: Kato (2022)

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Outline

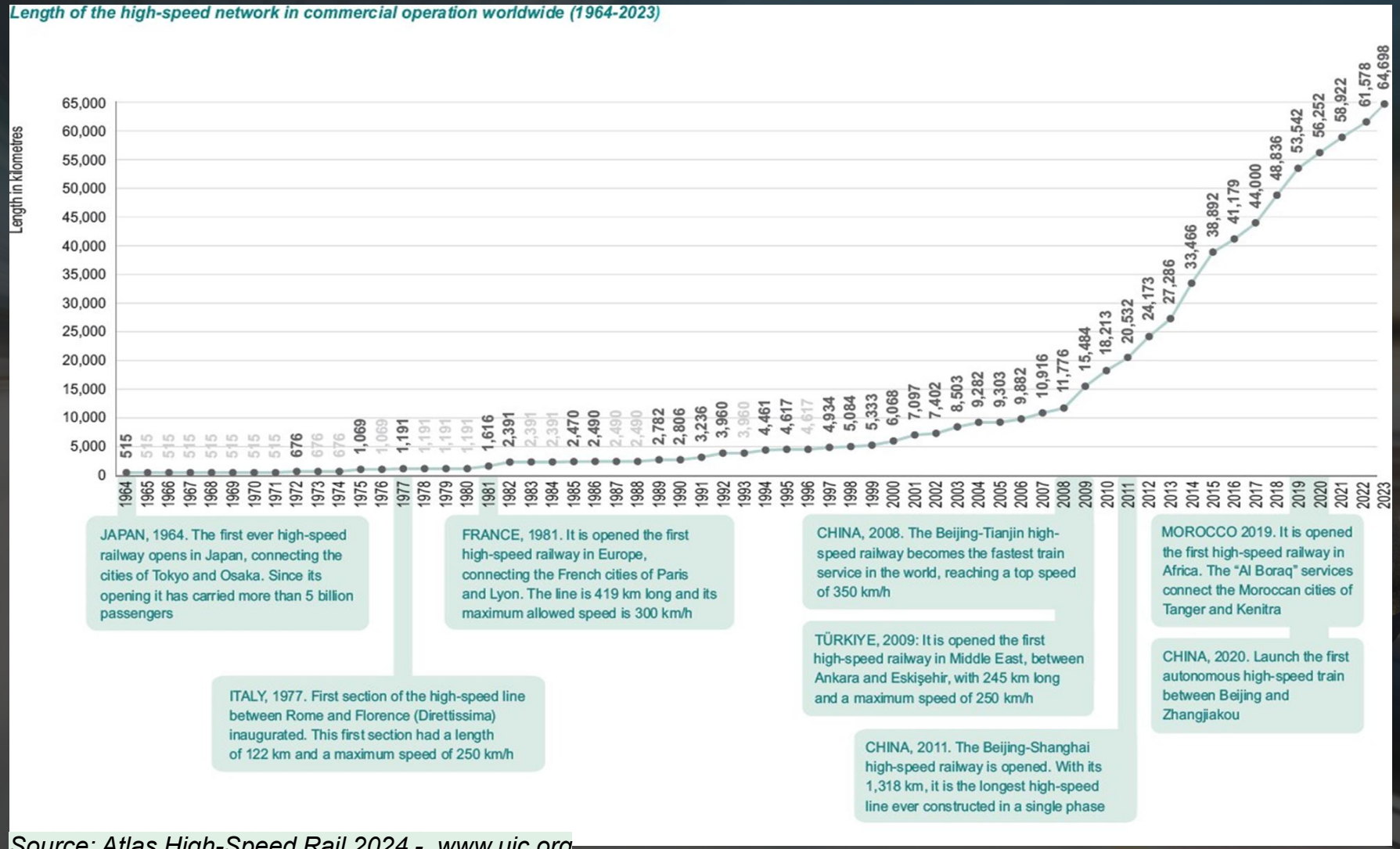
- ❑ High Speed Rail Global Development
- ❑ Top 10 Impacts of High-Speed Rail Systems
- ❑ New challenges for High-Speed Rail
- ❑ New challenges for Europe
- ❑ Lessons for US Policymakers



The Saint Lazare Station – Claude Monet (1877)

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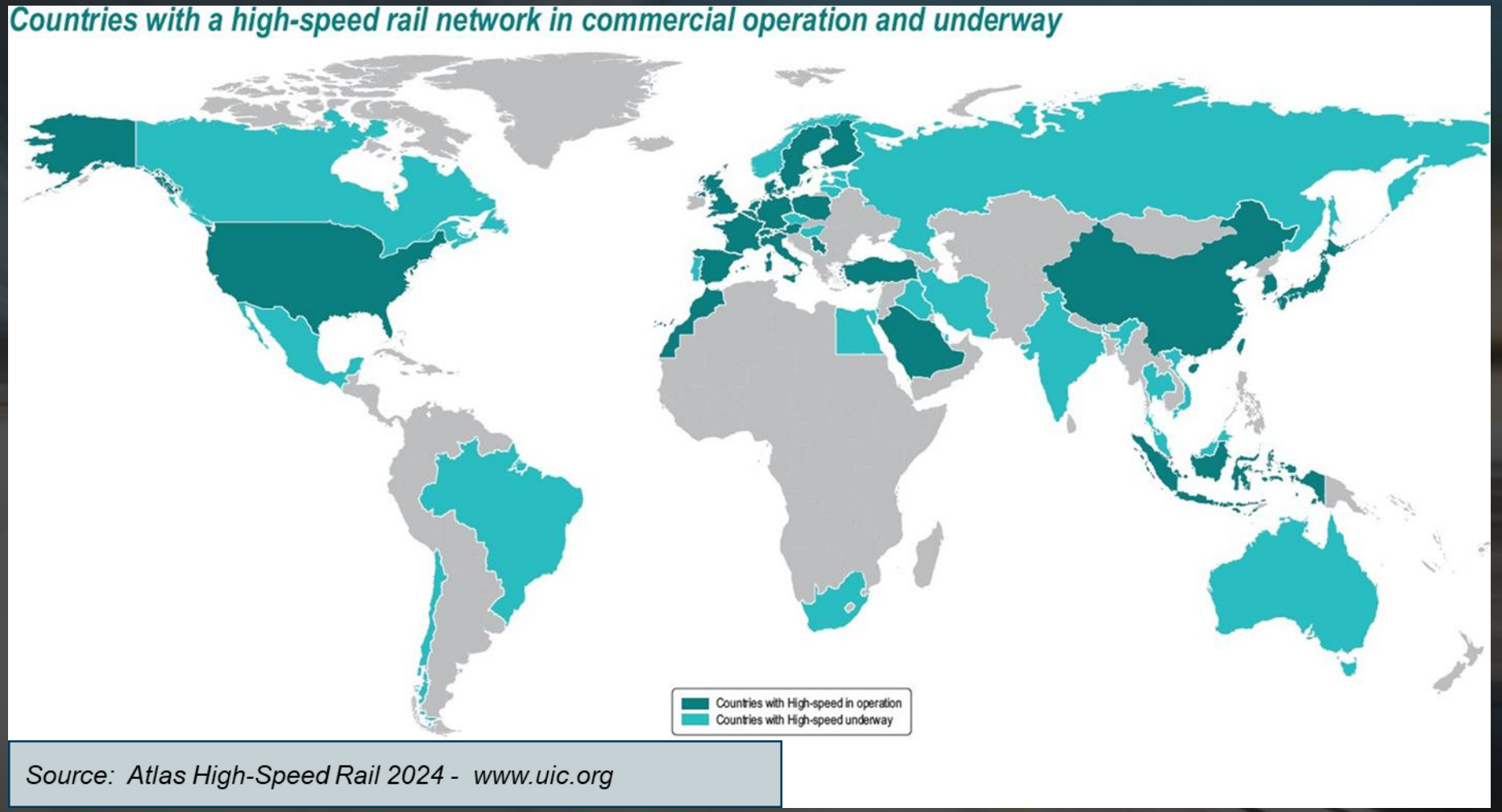
High-Speed Rail Global Development



Source: Atlas High-Speed Rail 2024 - www.uic.org

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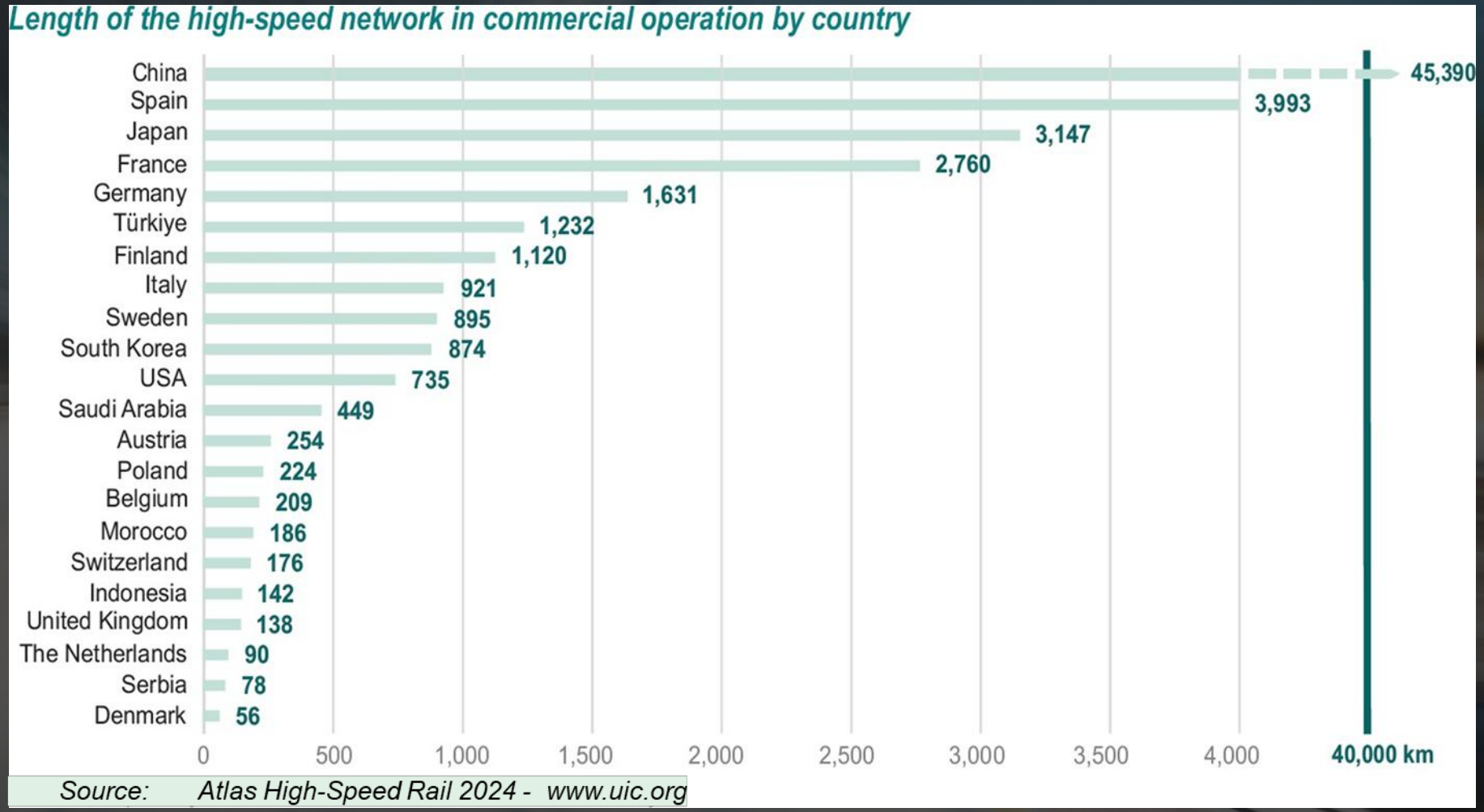
High-Speed Rail Global Development



Source: Atlas High-Speed Rail 2024 - www.uic.org

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High-Speed Rail Global Development

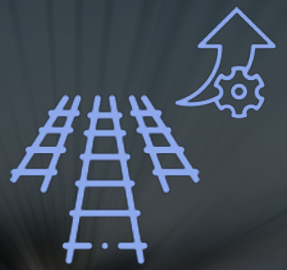


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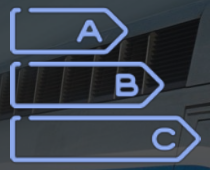
Top 10 Impacts of High-Speed Rail systems



Safest transport deliver



Infrastructure Capacity Enhancer



High energy efficiency provider



Congestion problem solver



Friend of the environment



Tourism promoter



Job opportunity creator



Economic growth contributor



Social Equalizer



Land-value booster

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Safest transport deliver

HSR saves lives and is proven safer than almost all other transport modes.

Japan was the first nation to build HSR in 1964 and has, since then, moved billions of passengers without injuries.

France has a similar record as do a number of other countries.

NB. Cars are the most dangerous transport mode due the number of accidents on motorways reported every day all over the world!



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Infrastructure capacity enhancer

HSR enhances capacity.

In **Italy,** it will only take 2 hours to travel by train between Naples and Bari, compared with 3h and 30mins today, and capacity will increase from 4 to 10 trains per hour along the double track sections.



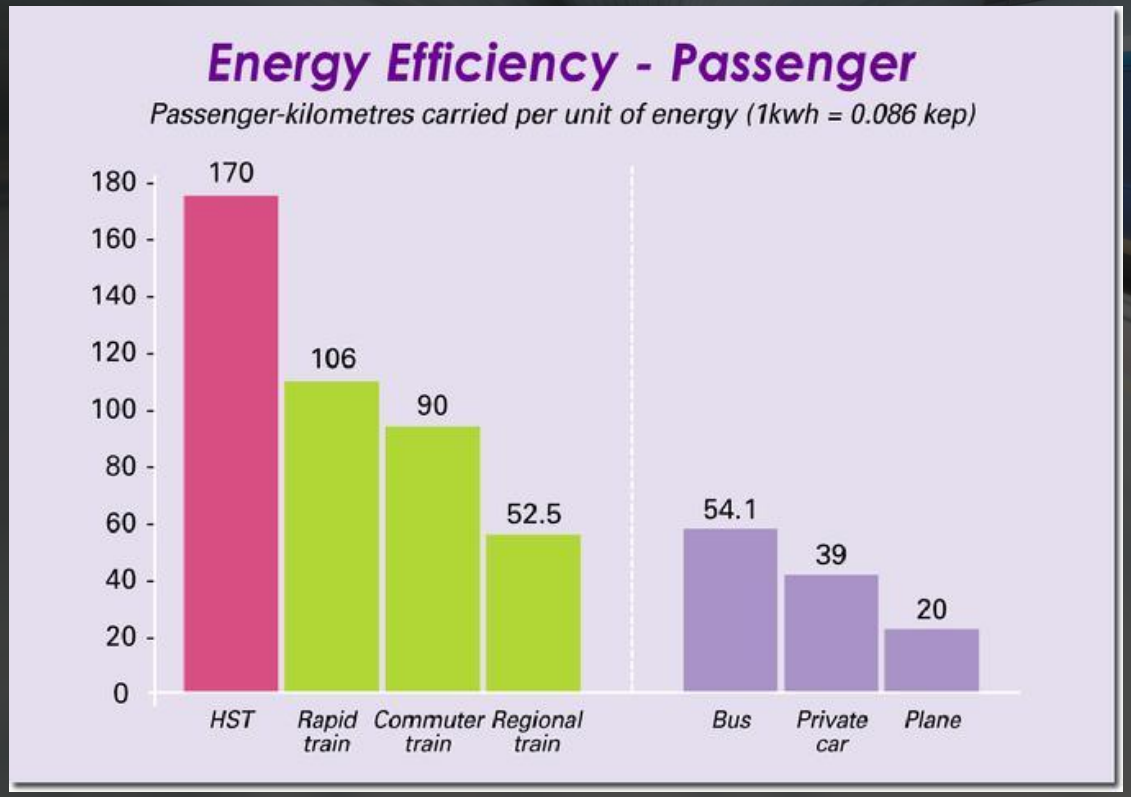


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High energy efficiency provider

HSR is the most favored transport mode for its high-efficiency and energy-saving features.

Amazing energy efficiency of HS trains





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Congestion problem solver

HSR is the only form of transportation not subject to congestion delays.

HSR not only delivers a new form of fast transportation, but also relieves congestion on highways and runways, making both of these systems function more effectively.

Riders get to their destinations quickly, efficiently and on time.

- ✓ New HSR routes in **China** led to a 20.5 log-point reduction in the number of passenger vehicles and a 15.7 log-point reduction in freight vehicles running on parallel highways.





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Friend of the environment

Compared with roadways, civil aviation, and other transport modes, railways are recognized as a greener transport mode.

New HSR routes in **China,** which contributed to a reduction in the number of passenger vehicles and to a reduction in freight vehicles running on parallel highways, also brought an annual reduction of around 11 million tons of CO_2 equivalent of GreenHouse Gas emissions in the provinces served.

In **China**, it was found that HSR reduced city's PM2.5 (fine particles) concentrations by 1.81%. Moreover, the opening of HSR reduced for the cities served SO_2 and wastewater emissions by promoting green technological innovation.



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Tourism promoter

HSR boosts tourism

High-speed rail stimulates tourism

2012-March-30 08:53 Shenzhen Daily

PASSENGERS with high-speed train tickets from Shenzhen or Guangzhou to Wuhan can enjoy discounts of 30-40 percent when visiting major tourism attractions in Central China's Hubei Province in April, a promotion of Hubei tourism authority said Wednesday.

Economy-class tickets for high-speed trains from Shenzhen to Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, and Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, on April 1, the opening day of Shenzhen-Wuhan High-Speed Rail, have sold out.

The high-speed rail, which cuts the Shenzhen-Wuhan journey to four hours, is expected to greatly stimulate tourism along the line.

"Hubei is now better connected with Pearl River Delta cities and we are inviting Guangdong travelers to enjoy sakura flowers in Wuhan University and visit our tourism attractions, such as Yellow Crane Tower, Three Gorges Dam and Donghu Lake," Zhang Dahua, Hubei tourism chief, said at a promotion Wednesday.

Shenzhen travel agencies are also mulling package tours to Wuhan and Changsha.

According to Liu Ke, marketing manager of China Travel Service Shenzhen Co., the three-day trip to Wuhan costs 2,000 yuan (US$317.25).

It costs 540 yuan for an economy seat to Wuhan and 390 yuan to Changsha.

According to line operator Guangzhou Railway Group, there will be 20 pairs of trains a day between Shenzhen, Changsha and Wuhan and the intervals for departures at Shenzhen North Railway Station are between 30 minutes and 90 minutes.(Han Ximin)

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Tourism promoter



Author	Case study	Level of analysis	Findings
Ortuño *et al*. (2016)	**Spain**	Regional level	**15–20% of new trips induced**, mainly from Madrid central node.
Gutiérrez and Ortuño (2017)	**Spain (Tarragona and Alicante)**	Province level	**Tourists** to Alicante tend to **make longer stays**, **arrive in larger groups**, and are older w.r.t those most likely to visit Tarragona.
Zhao and Li (2018)	**China**	City level	Regions served by HSR benefit from a **12% in tourist revenue**.
Yang and Li (2020)	**China**	Regional level	Attraction of HSR to **inbound tourists is 12% higher** w.r.t. the attraction of domestic tourists.
Piterina (2019)	**Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**	National level	Rail Baltica could impact the tourism market by inducing passengers 'trips. The **volume of induced passengers trips** can exceed the forecast of investment assessments by at **least three times**.

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Job opportunity creator

HSR can create job vacancies during its development stages.

Possible job vacancies:

- Train engineer
- Conductor
- Crew member
- Trainyard manager
- Cook
- Utility Clerk
- Dispatcher
- Position related to the running and maintenance



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Economic growth contributor

In **Spain**, investments in AVE had positive impacts on stimulating the GDP growth, establishing new firms, increasing employment levels and attracting population at provincial level.

In **Italy**, HSR has contributed to an extra growth of GDP of + 2.6% in 10 years of operation.

In **China**, HSR network promoted local GDP by approximately + 3.3%.



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Social Equalizer

Passengers with disabilities and old people (70+) can benefit from HSR more than cars and planes.

Not all people can afford cars or feel comfortable during the airport security procedures with their assistance equipment, etc.

HSR can assure more comfort and be more inclusive w.r.t other transport modes.



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Land-value booster

HSR has a major effect when the distance of the property from the HSR station decreases.

HSR boosts property prices.

East London UK

High impact on property prices nearby Stratford HSR station.



China

Average property prices increased between 7 and 9 % when HSR was introduced, and the impact was different for different land uses



Taipei China

Evidence of a 3.8% property price growth in Taipei, most significant effect on local property prices in the North region of China



Kyushu Japan

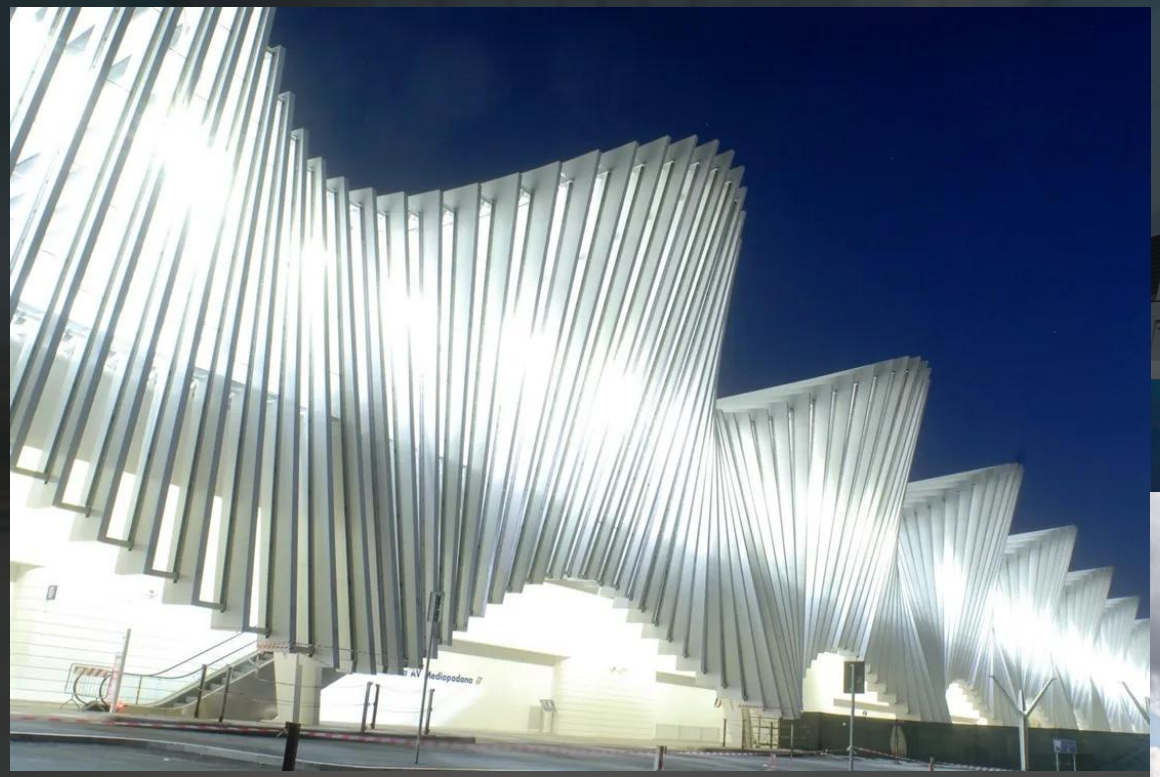
High increase of property prices in large metropolitan areas (10.7 %)



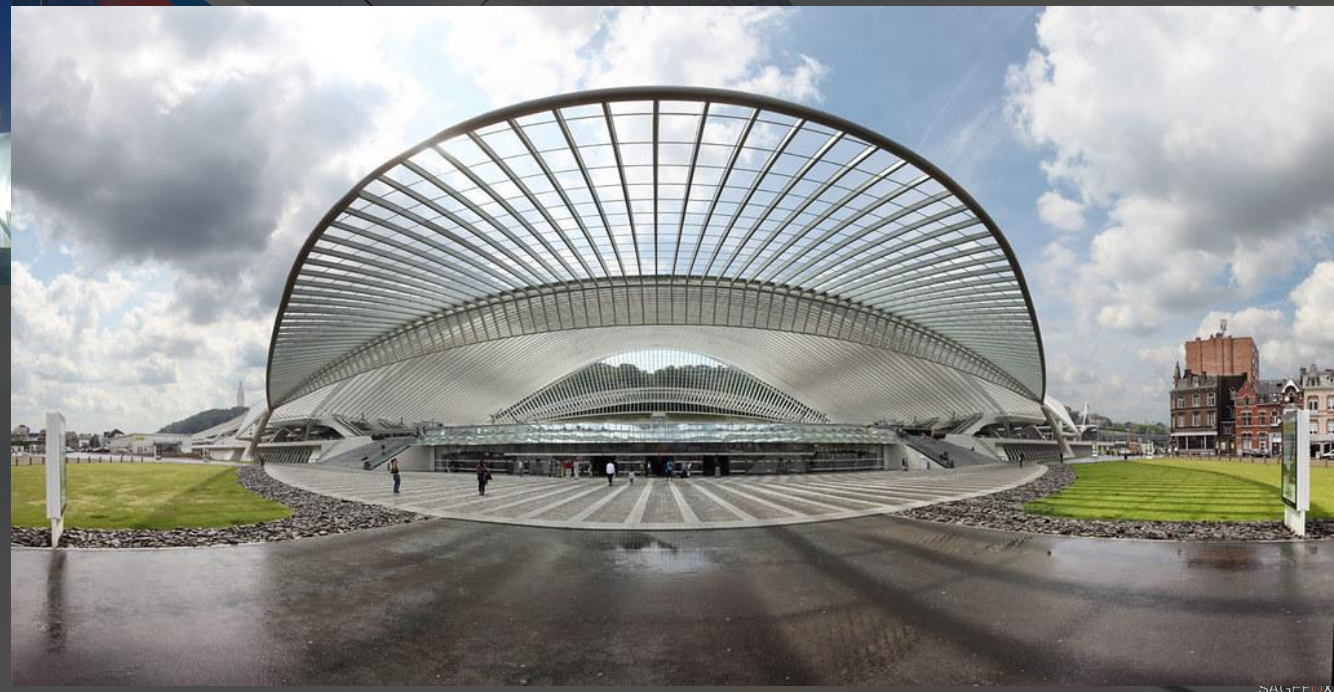
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New challanges for High-Speed Rail: HSR stations and temporary offices

HSR STATIONS: PIECES OF ARTWORK



HSR station at Reggio Emilia (Italy) by S. Calatrava



HSR station at Liège-Guillemin (Belgium) by S. Calatrava

New challenges for High-Speed Rail: HSR stations and temporary offices

HSR STATIONS: PIECES OF ARTWORK



HSR station at Haramain (Saudi Arabia) by N. Foster



HSR station at Naples-Afragola (Italy) by Z. Hadid

New challenges for High-Speed Rail: HSR stations and temporary offices

BUT THEY ARE ALSO WORKPLACES…

Investments in HSR systems:

- ✓ Increase the number of business travellers
- ✓ Foster the development of offices/temporary offices inside and around stations

What are temporary offices?

Fully-equipped offices to be rented by mobile workers for a given time-period.

“Mobile workers” are all the professionals, who spend part of their time working in different places. They usually do not own head-offices.

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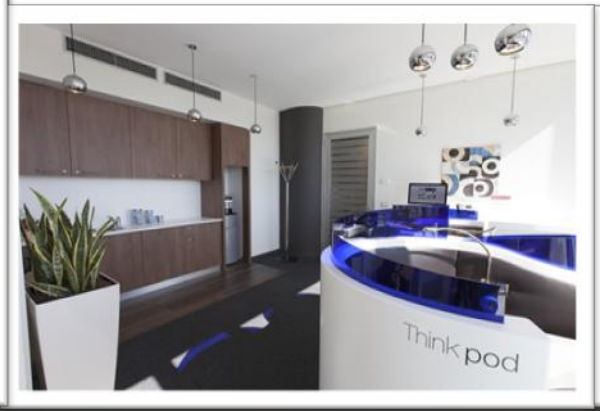
New challenges for High-Speed Rail: HSR stations and temporary offices



Regus offices inside the HSR station of Naples since Sep 2013









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New challenges for High-Speed Rail: HSR stations and temporary offices

Survey

- **37% of the clients** chose temporary offices because of **their location being inside the HSR station**.
- Temporary offices inside the HSR station **were rented also by local workers** and **not only by mobile workers**.

Source: Pagliara et al. (2016)

NB: Since Sep. 2013, the increase of mobile workers in the temporary offices inside Naples Garibaldi HSR station has been + 45%, while for the local workers the increase has been + 55%. This trend is confirmed also in the other Italian offices. In the office close to Milan Central HSR station, the increase of mobile workers in some periods of the year has been +70%.

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

100th European Citizens' Initiative: Connecting all EU capitals and people through a high-speed train network



What is a European Citizens' initiative?

- A European citizen can participate in EU-policy development by means of a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI).
- An ECI can request the European Commission to propose new EU legislation on the topic concerned, and
- To show there is significant support from Europeans, the ECI needs to gain 1,000,000 signatures from EU-citizens to back the topic.

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

- **18th April 2023**, the European Commission decided to register the 100th European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) entitled “Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network”.

- The objective is to connect all European capitals through high-speed railway lines by linking the existing high-speed railway networks and building new high-speed lines where these do not exist yet. It would have been necessary to collect **1,000,000 signatures by 30th May 2024** and for at least 7 EU member countries it would have been necessary to exceed the minimum threshold.

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI



COLLECTION ONGOING

Preservation and development of Ukrainian culture, education, language, and traditions in EU states

262 supporters

Support this initiative



COLLECTION ONGOING

Creation of a European Environment Authority

11,735 supporters

Support this initiative

TRUST & FREEDOM

COLLECTION ONGOING

Trust and Freedom

19,245 supporters

Support this initiative

HSR

COLLECTION ONGOING

Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network

39,234 supporters

Support this initiative

TAX THE RICH

COLLECTION ONGOING

Taxing great wealth to finance the ecological and social transition.

159,589 supporters

Support this initiative



COLLECTION ONGOING

End The Horse Slaughter Age

13,456 supporters

Support this initiative

Stop Border Violence

COLLECTION ONGOING

Article 4: Stop torture and inhuman treatment at Europe's borders

18,379 supporters

Support this initiative

#Dignity in Europe

COLLECTION ONGOING

Ensuring a dignified reception of migrants in Europe

15,290 supporters

Last call for support

Support this initiative

Source: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

- Total EU voting citizens: **40,661**
- Total expected EU voters: **1,000,000**

1st Nation by % of voters



- No. of Dutch voting citizens: **7,137**
- Percentage of Dutch voters compared to “expected voters”: **34.91%**

2nd Nation by % of voters



- No. of Romanian voting citizens: **3,502**
- Percentage of Romanian voters compared to “expected voters”: **15.05%**

Italian number of voters



- No. of Italians voting for the 100th European Citizens' Initiative: **2,195**
- Percentage of Italian voters compared to the “expected voters”: **4.10%**

Source: https://www.connect-capitals-hsr.eu/

Last update: May 31th

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

Environmental Impacts

- Reduction of emitted CO2 by 2070 (2030 Scenario): **-1,5 bn ton CO_2**
- Reduction of emitted CO2 by 2070 (2050 Scenario): **- 5 bn ton CO_2**

Infrastructure growth

- Length of the network (Basic Scenario): **15.200 km**
- Length of the network (2030 Scenario): **20.500 km**
- Length of the network (2050 Scenario): **49.400 km**
- **Increase of the length of the network (2030 Scenario): +34%**
- **Increase of the length of the network (2050 Scenario): +225%**

Source:

Deutsche Bahn (2023): A strong European railway for an ever closer union – report available at https://www.deutschebahn.com/resource/blob/10878412/fadda7e9a3233aa044fa73fada00bf18/ Studie_Metropolitan-Network-_A-Strong-European-railway-data.pdf

Europe's Rail (2023): Smart and affordable rail services in the EU: a socio-economic and environmental study for High-Speed in 2030 and 2050, report available at https://rail-research.europa.eu/publications/smart-and-affordable-rail-services-in-the-eu-a-socio-economic-and-environmental-study-for-high-speed-in-2030-and-2050/

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New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

Economic Impacts

- Construction costs (2030 Scenario): **63-122 bn €**
- Construction costs (2050 Scenario): **410-855 bn €**
- **Estimated economic benefits (2030 Scenario): 400-447 bn €**
- **Estimated economic benefit (2050 Scenario): 561-836 bn €**
- **HSR market share for 500-1000 km distances (Basic Scenario): 13%**
- **HSR market share for 500-1000 km distances (2050 Scenario): 27%**
- Incremental GVA from construction (2030 Scenario): **13 bn €**
- Incremental GVA from construction (2050 Scenario): **85 bn €**

Source:

Deutsche Bahn (2023): A strong European railway for an ever closer union – report available at https://www.deutschebahn.com/resource/blob/10878412/fadda7e9a3233aa044fa73fada00bf18/ Studie_Metropolitan-Network-_A-Strong-European-railway-data.pdf

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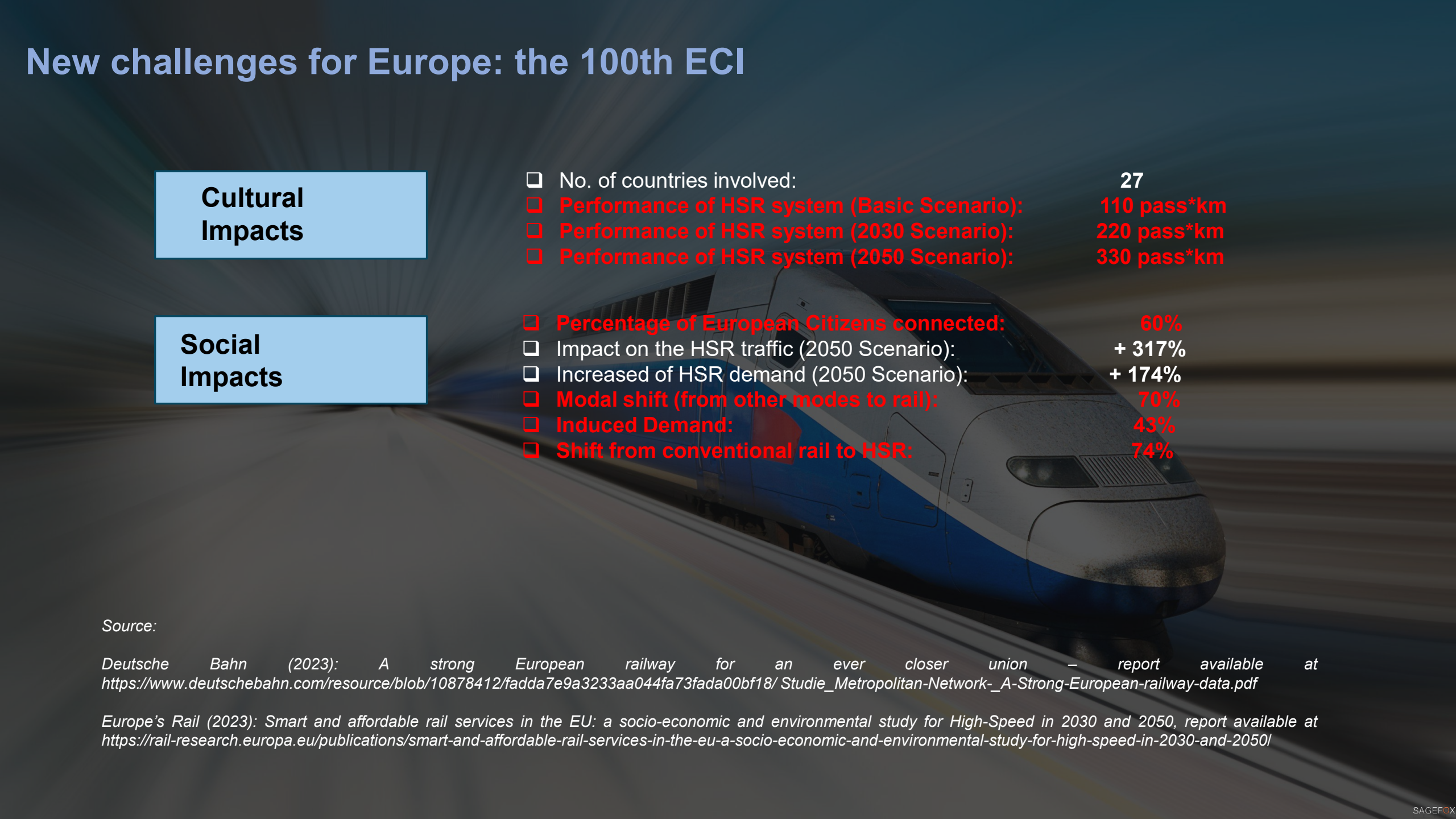
New challenges for Europe: the 100th ECI

Cultural Impacts

- ❑ No. of countries involved: **27**
- ❑ **Performance of HSR system (Basic Scenario): 110 pass*km**
- ❑ **Performance of HSR system (2030 Scenario): 220 pass*km**
- ❑ **Performance of HSR system (2050 Scenario): 330 pass*km**

Social Impacts

- ❑ **Percentage of European Citizens connected: 60%**
- ❑ Impact on the HSR traffic (2050 Scenario): **+ 317%**
- ❑ Increased of HSR demand (2050 Scenario): **+ 174%**
- ❑ **Modal shift (from other modes to rail): 70%**
- ❑ **Induced Demand: 43%**
- ❑ **Shift from conventional rail to HSR: 74%**



Source:

Deutsche Bahn (2023): A strong European railway for an ever closer union – report available at https://www.deutschebahn.com/resource/blob/10878412/fadda7e9a3233aa044fa73fada00bf18/ Studie_Metropolitan-Network-_A-Strong-European-railway-data.pdf

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New challenges for Europe: further steps

- **The future of European Competitiveness** (13th September, 2024) by Dr Mario Draghi reports "*One way to increase the European Competitiveness is to connect it by HSR*".

- **Mission Letter** (17th September, 2024) by the President of the European Commission, on page 5: "*I would like to put forward a plan for an ambitious European high-speed rail network to help connect EU capitals, including through night trains, and to accelerate rail freight".*



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New challenges for Europe: further steps

polling Europe

EUROSCOPE
The pulse of the European public Opinion

Perception of High-Speed Rail in Europe

Survey report

May
2025



Image @Wirestock

Research Methodology

This survey has been **conducted online** through CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interview) on a sample representative of the European Union 18+ population.

The **total sample size is 5.107** complete interviews, distributed proportionally to the population of the 27 EU countries with a slight correction which allows to analyze the data on the pan-European level, with breakdowns for the 5 largest countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland) and for 3 different areas: Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe. For each country proportional quotas were set for age and gender. Quotas were calculated regarding the most recent parameters provided by Eurostat.

Interviews were collected **between the 16th and 25th of May 2025**.

The report shows breakdowns by the following geographical areas:



1) Germany
2) France



3) CEE – Central and Eastern Countries (Baltic states, Poland, Czech R., Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia)



4) Northern Countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands, Lux., Ireland, Austria)

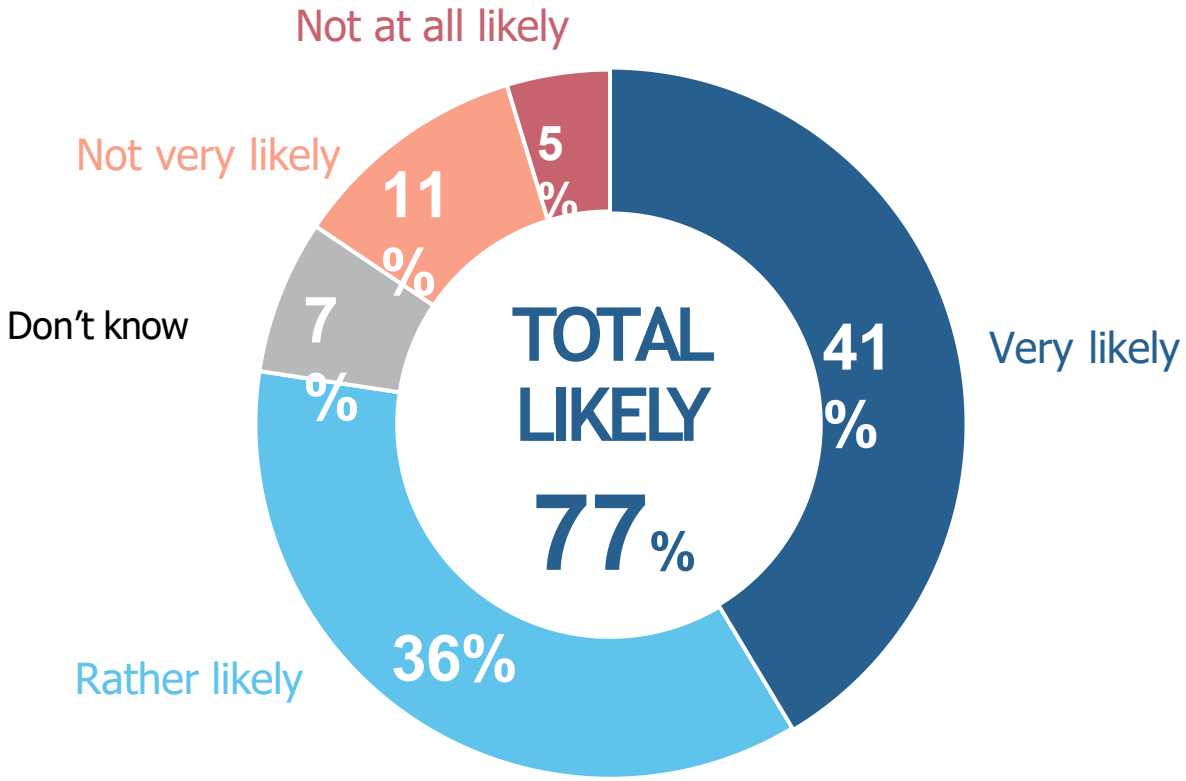




5) Southern Countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Malta, Cyprus) +separate data for Italy, Spain and Poland.

Likelihood of using high-speed trains instead of flights if infrastructures were to be improved

All respondents: 5,107

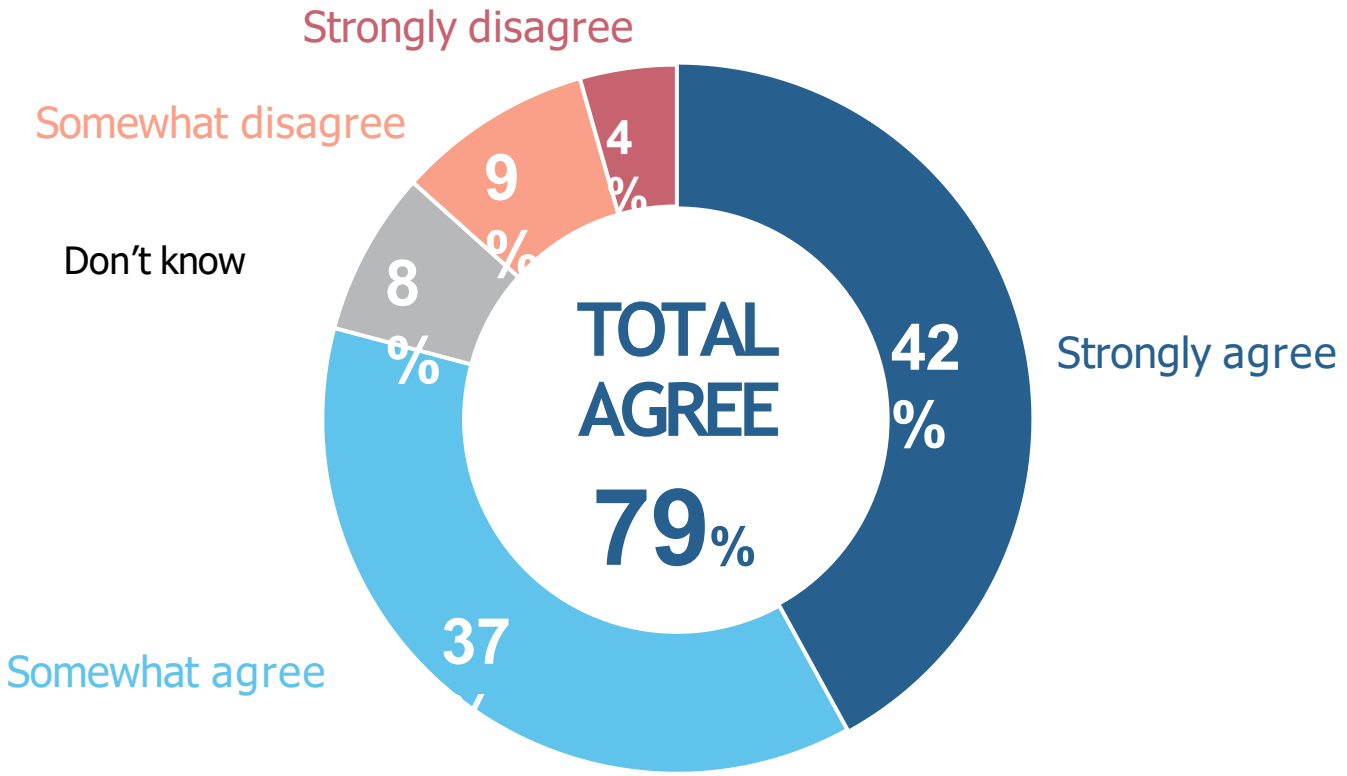


If there were fast and reliable high-speed trains most of EU citizens would switch to this transportation method for short and medium distances connections.
A significant share, 41%, shows a strong propensity to prefer the train.

Q. If there were fast and reliable high-speed trains between all European capitals and major urban areas, how likely would you be to take a high-speed train instead of flying for short and medium-distance trips in Europe?

Agreement with European investment on high-speed rail

All respondents: 5,107



The large majority of EU citizens believes Europe should invest more on high-speed rails, 4 out of 10 strongly support this perspective.

Q. Do you agree or disagree that Europe should invest more in high-speed rail to make it easier to travel between European countries?

New challenges for Europe: further steps

The EC High-Speed Rail Plan,
European Commission (5th November, 2025)

The European Commission is unveiling a comprehensive plan to accelerate the development of high-speed rail across the EU, offering passengers significantly reduced travel times. By boosting fast, comfortable, safe and reliable rail services, the plan supports the EU's twin goals of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050 and strengthening Europe's global competitiveness.



Lessons for US Policymakers

HSR has the potential for megalopolis formation

❑ *"An integrated economic urban complex - created by fusion of multiple cities connected by high-speed transportation of 200-300 km/h"* (Sussman, 2011).

❑ *"A geographical area that shares a common labor market and a common market for household and business services*" (Blum *et al.*, 2009).

Impacts observed:

- **Significant increase in one-day round trips between a pair or group of cities.**
- **Increase of induced demand.**
- **Induced demand for business trips.**
- **Increase in the number of daily commuters.**
- **Decrease of hotel overnight stays.**

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Lessons for US Policymakers

HSR has the potential for megalopolis formation

- **Newly megalopolis**, shaped by HSR, **will bring institutional changes**.
- Who will be **the mayor of the newly megalopolis**?
- The mayor of the City of New Rome initially remained committed to a regressive status quo, preserving his special interests …..but in the end of the movie…. a happy end …..he celebrated the New Year in the heart of Megalopolis (Coppola, 2024).
- ……and **what will happen to EU capitals** connected by HSR?



Megalopolis, Francis Ford Coppola (2024)

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Lessons for US Policymakers

- There is **no single institutional model for successful HSR**. Successful systems share some common principles: strong coordination, clear responsibilities, accountability, and long-term policy stability.

- **Institutions should be designed for the long term**. **Successful HSR systems** invest in specialist organizations with expertise in planning, regulation, safety, maintenance, and research. These institutions help preserve knowledge and ensure continuity even when political priorities change. **Building institutional capacity is just as important as building physical infrastructure**.

- **Strong cooperation between different sectors is essential**. Governments, railway operators, manufacturers, universities, and research institutions need to work together on innovation, workforce development, digital technologies, and operational improvements.

- **HSR institutions should be prepared for continuous innovation**. The future of HSR will increasingly depend on digital signaling, predictive maintenance, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and decarbonization. Institutions need enough flexibility to adopt new technologies and respond to changing mobility needs.

- **Successful HSR is not only about building world-class infrastructure. It is also about building world-class institutions**. Clear governance, strong technical expertise, collaboration across sectors, and long-term policy consistency are the foundations of a safe, efficient, innovative, and internationally competitive HSR system.

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1st INTERNATIONAL
WORKSHOP
on HIGH-SPEED RAIL
socioeconomic impacts
Alliance of Universities
for High-Speed Railway
14-15 September 2021
ONLINE
uic


2nd INTERNATIONAL
WORKSHOP
on HIGH-SPEED RAIL
socioeconomic impacts
Alliance of Universities
for High-Speed Railway
13-14 September 2022
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3rd INTERNATIONAL
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12-13 September 2023
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4th INTERNATIONAL
WORKSHOP
on HIGH-SPEED RAIL
socioeconomic impacts
Alliance of Universities
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5th INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM
on HIGH-SPEED RAIL
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9-10 September 2025
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6th INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM
on HIGH-SPEED RAIL
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8-9 September 2026
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Lessons for US Policymakers

- Since launching the International Symposium on High-Speed Rail Socioeconomic Impacts in 2021, **one of the clearest findings has been that we still lack robust and comparable evidence on how HSR affects countries at different stages of economic development**.
- **Most existing research focuses on mature HSR systems in high-income economies**, while evidence from middle- and lower-income countries remains limited. This creates an important research gap.
- **The first priority is cross-country comparison**. We need standardized methodologies that allow us to compare the effects of HSR on productivity, regional development, land values, labor mobility, tourism, and social inclusion. **Without common frameworks, it is difficult to understand which benefits can be transferred from one country to another, and which depend on specific local conditions.**
- **The second gap concerns the long-term impact of HSR**. Many studies focus on the years immediately following the opening of a new line. However, some of the most important effects, such as industrial development, innovation, urban transformation, and changes in regional economic structures, can take decades to emerge. **We therefore need more longitudinal research that follows these projects over much longer periods.**
- **A third area is governance and institutions**. Countries can make similar infrastructure investments but achieve very different results because of differences in governance, financing, land-use planning, and human capital**. Understanding these institutional factors is therefore just as important as studying the technology and engineering of HSR.**

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Lessons for US Policymakers

New Trend

Shift toward Well-Being from traditional evaluation focusing on travel time savings; capacity increase and economic growth.

Transport systems influence daily experiences; stress levels; life satisfaction and quality of life.

"Subjective Well-Being involves people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives" (Diener, 1984).

"Subjective Well-Being is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction" (Diener et al., 1999).

"Good mental states, including all of the various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the affective reactions of people to their experiences" (OECD, 2013).

"The empirical science of subjective well-being, popularly referred to as happiness or satisfaction..." (Diener et al., 2018).

- **Research Question: How does High-Speed Rail affect passengers' Subjective Well Being?**

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Lessons for US Policymakers

- **Design Experiences, Not Only Services**
  Operational quality matters most when journeys are felt comfortable, and stress-free.

- **Prioritise Emotional Travel Quality**
  Reducing crowding, fatigue, uncertainty, etc.…strengthens Subjective Well-Being and Travel Behaviour.

- **Consider Subjective Well-Being as a Strategic Lever**
  Positive travel experiences increase Costumer Loyalty and Willingness To Pay.

- **Reposition High-Speed Rail as an Experiential Transport Mode**
  High-Speed Rail creates emotional value, it does not bring only efficiency, etc.

Does the competitiveness of HSR w.r.t. to alternative transport modes increase substantially when the journey design prioritizes passengers' travel experience, focusing on how they FEEL, rather than concentrating exclusively on objective performances such as speed and travel time?

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Lessons for US Policymakers

Beyond Speed and Efficiency

Does **High-Speed Rail** create **Value** through **Experience**, not **Service Quality** alone?

High-Speed Rail should be not just a fast transport mode, but also a gateway to a more meaningful and emotionally enriching journey!

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