

California's High Speed Rail 2.0



NINE BILLION DOLLARS LATER

Back then: January 6, 2015. On a wonderful day in downtown Fresno, California Governor Jerry Brown, accompanied by federal officials and city leaders, held a ceremonial groundbreaking at the site of the planned high-speed rail station. Planned construction of the first phase was scheduled to be completed in 3-5 years.

Now: February 12, 2019. California's new Governor, Gavin Newsom, announces plan to abandon California's goal of a high speed rail system between San Francisco and Los Angeles and announces a new plan to completing a rail line between Merced to Bakersfield for a total of 165 miles. Alternatively some published reports indicate completion only between Fresno and Bakersfield, a total of 110 miles. All subject to changes yet to be announced.

The above photo is a projection of the revised rail plan in operation down California's Central Valley. A happy Fresno family is zipping down the tracks for a fun daylong tour of Bakersfield and the Oilfields followed by dinner at the local Truck Stop. Finish the day with a return California High Speed Rail trip to Fresno. Bakersfield and Fresno are both fine cities but it is hard to imagine them being the anchors for a profitable, high volume, high speed rail travel enterprise.

This is California. What could possibly go wrong?

As a kind of Postscript: The following is from an article I wrote in Sept. 2013 about California's High Speed Rail plans

Against voter objections, California is now on a path to install the first phase of a High Speed Rail System using some Nine Billion borrowed State and Federal Dollars. The first phase has begun and should be completed in 3-5 years depending on lawsuits, strikes, environmental reports, delays, cost overruns etc.

Upon completion of this first phase, rail passengers will be able to drive some 15 miles west of their small central valley town to a rail station built on government seized, former farmland in the middle of nowhere. Here they can park their car and board the High Speed Train traveling at speeds up to 160 miles per hour for some 28 miles to another rail station located on government seized, former farmland in the middle of nowhere. On arrival at destination station, they can disembark the train and get into another vehicle (friend, family member, bus or cab) and drive some 15 miles east to another small central valley town which, by the the way, is some 28 highway

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miles from their original point of departure in the small central valley town. Disneyland, eat your heart out.

For those who think this is just another waste of money, Government boondoggle and/or labor union payoff, California residents are promised that at some vague distant future date their grand children, or great-grand children will be able to travel from Los Angeles to San Francisco in about 2 hours on a completed High Speed Rail system that will only cost about 40 Gazillion Dollars to complete and take some 15 -40 years to build. Ticket prices on the High Speed Rail System are hoped to be only a few hundred dollars each way.

Did I mention that you can fly between San Francisco and Los Angeles in about an hour for around \$100 on flights that leave every 30 minutes or so?

Completion of the whole High Speed Rail project is forecast by our governor for 2028 or so (fingers firmly crossed).

Of course, there may be a few delays.

Government negotiators are currently in meetings with Oprah Winfrey about running the future High Speed Train through the front yard of her Malibu mansion which just happens to lie on the only logical coastal route around the mountains between Bakersfield and the Los Angeles basin.

If those talks fail they will begin talks with the Sierra Club about a sort of Ski-Lift operation (still in engineering design stages) to move the train over the mountains or, possibly, a forty mile tunnel through the mountains along the San Andreas Earthquake fault line.

You can't make this stuff up.

Bob Bandy