



Beyond the Tracks

The potential of high-speed rail to reshape California's growth



(above) Over 11,000 miles of high-speed rail lines are currently under construction in China, where the government plans to finish a \$300 billion, 16,000-mile network by 2020.

(below) Near Merced, California's high-speed rail line will fork into two Northern California routes – one connecting the Central Valley with San Francisco and the other continuing through

Modesto and Stockton enroute to Sacramento's Valley Station, an intermodal hub with connections to Amtrak, intercity buses and lightrail. The 240-acre station area (pictured here) is expected

to become one of the largest transit-oriented developments in the U.S., featuring 12,000 housing units, office space for 19,000 jobs, a Railroad Museum and a thriving retail district.



California's planned high-speed rail system will be the state's most significant transportation infrastructure project since the 1950s. But the system alone won't stop sprawl. Smart land-use planning is key to ensuring that communities are poised to reap its potential economic and environmental benefits.

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The potential of high-speed rail to reshape California's growth

High-speed rail has the potential to offer Californians far more than the opportunity to travel quickly around the state. Throughout the world, high-speed rail systems have had profound and transformational impacts on cities, metropolitan areas and broader megaregions.

California is now planning to invest tens of billions of dollars in the design and construction of a high-speed train system from San Francisco to Anaheim, and later to extend it to Sacramento and San Diego. This investment in the state's future is comparable to the Higher Education Master Plan, the state highway system and the State Water Project of the mid-20th century.

In an era of rising skepticism and public projects of all sorts, high-speed rail represents the best of California's optimism, environmental concern and future orientation. The high-speed rail project could have great economic and environmental benefits to the state and the 26 communities with proposed high-speed rail stations. For each of these communities, the coming of the train is a unique opportunity for municipalities to capture new fiscal benefits and to organize growth in a more compact and less automobile-oriented manner.

However, major investments in land-use changes around the stations are necessary to fully realize the benefits of high-speed rail. If such investment does not occur, both the economic and environmental benefits will be significantly reduced.

This paper explores what it will take to generate a land-use planning and development response to the high-speed rail investment at both a statewide level and in the 26 communities that will receive stations.

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The Opportunity of High-Speed Rail

The full benefits of high-speed rail will come from catalyzing private investment and development around the stations. We identify the following seven opportunities as particularly important:

1. High-speed rail makes communities functionally closer to each other by shortening travel time between them.

By decreasing the travel time between cities, high-speed rail transforms what some call the “time/space” relationship between parts of the state. In other words, high-speed rail makes two places that were once far apart appear to be closer together by making travel between them easier and faster. This is particularly true for the relationship between cities in the Central Valley like Fresno and Bakersfield and cities along the coast such as San Jose, San Francisco and Los Angeles. By making cities closer together, high-speed rail could enable employment growth in industries seeking close connection and interaction. This phenomenon has already occurred in other countries with high-speed rail systems. This suggests that high-speed rail should enhance California’s economy and stimulate employment and income generation to benefit California’s people.

2. High-speed rail could revitalize existing downtowns.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority made the right choice for the alignment to go through existing downtowns rather than bypassing them through cheaper land at the outskirts. This provides an opportunity to reinforce city centers along the entire length of the high-speed rail line.

But some downtowns face market challenges. For example, Fresno has experienced virtually no new investment in its downtown in decades. It is simply not likely or feasible in the short run for the private sector to produce dense development near the high-speed rail station. The rail alone will not transform this market dynamic.

Consider how little new development has gone into areas next to BART stations in Oakland since the opening of the BART system in the early 1970s and you get a sense of the challenge of causing transit-oriented development patterns to follow the transit in places where demand for space is not high enough to cover the costs of construction. Figuring out how to make compact development surrounding new high-speed rail stations economically feasible is then a major priority for communities like Fresno.

3. High-speed rail should contribute to poverty alleviation and social equity.

For many areas of the state, especially the San Joaquin Valley, high-speed rail development should help facilitate new economic activity and provide for much-needed access to new employment

opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. Some of the employment opportunities will be directly tied to high-speed rail — for example, construction and repair work on the system. Other opportunities will be more indirect, such as firms relocating or residents having higher incomes because they commute to other job centers on the rail system. While ticket costs will not likely make it a daily commute system for many people, for those who do commute, they will bring their incomes earned elsewhere to spend in the local economy. The more a local economy is suffering, the greater it will benefit from the local spending by higher-income commuters when they return home.

4. High-speed rail should contribute to the development of high-quality urban environments.

Each high-speed rail station is an important node on a statewide system. If properly designed and built, these places will add to California’s already rich and diverse spectrum of cities.

Examples from European and Japanese cities have demonstrated how a high-speed rail station can be a catalyst for improved urban environments, both in the form of great architecture for the train stations and through well-designed new development in the surrounding area.

But experience with airport design also offers some lessons on what to avoid. If high-speed rail stations become planned like mini-airports, surrounded by parking and access roads, they become areas that repel good development in their vicinity because of wide streets and parking lots. If not properly managed, the provision of parking could overwhelm the station area and destroy the pedestrian environment around the station.

Overall, high-speed rail provides a major opportunity to reshape the surrounding environment to reflect principles of good urban place-making.

5. High-speed rail provides the opportunity to better connect key destinations within an existing city or community.

For each city with a high-speed rail station, access to that station will be important. So, too, will be connecting from the station to important destinations in the surrounding city or area (such as universities, airports, other job centers).

Passengers will access the many destinations that are a short cab ride or transit trip from the high-speed rail station. There is only so much land around the proposed 26 stations for new development. As a result, planning and designing an intermodal system that connects people with transit, taxi, biking and walking from the station areas is key.

6. High-speed rail provides an opportunity to reduce sprawl, but only if exurban development is limited.

High-speed rail will have major regional consequences on growth. While it is critical that the economic benefits of high-speed rail should be maximized, the potential effects of the system on larger



Proposed California High-Speed Rail

There are 26 stations proposed for California's high-speed rail system. When the station is built, a trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles will take 2.5 hours. The proposed system alignment will pass through existing downtowns rather than bypass them through cheaper land at the outskirts. SPUR has always supported this alignment as an opportunity to reinforce city centers and encourage economic development along the entire length of the high-speed rail line.

Source: California High-Speed Rail Authority

urban development patterns should not be ignored. Especially in less urbanized areas, such as the San Joaquin Valley, the presence of a new high-speed rail station could, unless proscribed, precipitate new low-density development over a broad area. Such development could seriously harm both air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. Once under way, low-density development would be virtually unstoppable. It is appropriate, therefore, to provide for measures to restrain development at the edges of cities with stations.

7. High-speed rail can help meet state climate-change goals.

California's climate-change law is Assembly Bill 32, which requires California to develop regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. By locating high-speed rail stations within existing downtowns and making easy connections between high-speed rail trains and local transit lines, the system will help facilitate non-auto travel throughout the state. This in turn will help meet state and regional greenhouse gas reduction targets. High-speed rail will also reduce air travel, a key contributor to climate change.

What We're Up Against: California's development constraints

This paper presents an argument that good land use and development is the key to making high-speed rail a success. We have tried to be conscious about the many constraints that may limit California and its communities from responding to the opportunities of high-speed rail.

1. There is no clear source of funding for planning.

As a society, we do not invest substantial amounts in planning our near or long-term future. As governments experience fiscal distress, long-term planning is often one of the first things to go. In California, city planning departments typically rely on fees from developers to pay for many of their employees, which means that staff are often needed on more immediate projects rather than long-term planning such as station area plans. Many cities will struggle to pay for the

kind of intensive planning work we describe in this paper unless we come up with a dedicated funding source.

2. There are insufficient funds invested in building and maintaining infrastructure.

We have also under-invested in our overall infrastructure needs. While urbanists may bemoan the extent to which highways capture the majority of transportation funds, the truth is that all aspects of our state and national infrastructure are woefully underfunded. Yet making high-speed rail work will be expensive. In addition to the high-speed rail system, local communities will need new or improved transit systems as well as redesigned and rebuilt streets and sidewalks, and upgraded sewer and water systems to serve added infill density. There is simply no obvious source of funds to pay for all of these needs. As a result, some places may elect to not take on growth because of its potential to strain a burdened infrastructure.

3. Local control over land-use planning may not result in a sufficient land-use response to high-speed rail in terms of statewide needs.

Local governments, though legally “creatures of the state,” nonetheless retain most decision-making powers regarding local land use. Yet in order for the entire state high-speed rail system to work, each local community with a station (and even some of those nearby without stations) must support an appropriate land-use response that makes the system work. This means planning for growth, rezoning parcels and actually approving specific development projects. Accomplishing this is a statewide goal. Reconciling the need for a statewide land-use response to high-speed rail with the recognition that land-use decisions are essentially local is one of the challenges of this paper. As a result, this paper identifies tools and incentives for local governments to plan in such a way that supports statewide goals.

4. Few tools exist to limit sprawl at the edges of regions and urbanized areas.

Just as there are few ways to compel local governments to establish a particular land-use response around high-speed rail stations, so too there are few tools to compel cities and regions to limit the potential for high-speed rail to induce sprawl at the edges. Even a city that supports infill in its boundaries cannot compel the county to limit growth in the unincorporated land beyond. In fact, many counties have an incentive to develop this land precisely because it is the only land they receive unique revenue from.

5. Our historic urban pattern requires a car for most travel within communities with proposed high-speed rail stations.

When BART was implemented in the 1970s, communities with stations were not required to fully develop land-use plans to support the goals of this major public investment. Some stations — like this one in North Berkeley — became islands surrounded by parking lots with no change to the surrounding land uses, which limited ridership and encouraged driving rather than discouraged driving.

Learning from BART

Why good land use and transit planning are important



While downtown San Francisco supported the growth of a dense commercial district immediately adjacent to BART, some of the areas around suburban stations such as North Berkeley have hardly changed in the three decades since BART arrived. Why did this occur?

It could be due to the ironies of history. BART, conceived in the 1950s at the height of postwar technological optimism, was designed during the transitional decade of the 1960s and opened during the 1970s to a very different situation. No longer did every community in the region uncritically welcome the growth that BART was intended to enable. As a result, as the system opened, many communities responded by reducing the amount of development allowed

in zones near the stations. That response of limiting growth around BART would have been inconceivable to BART's inventors, who envisioned a transportation system that would channel growth and reduce suburban sprawl.

BART was designed and built without a good land-use plan or a change to the land-use planning process that would lead to transit-oriented development around stations. There was no requirement that communities with stations develop station area plans or support development around stations. And as the system was planned, built and expanded through the years, the only land that BART owned and controlled included the train tracks, the station platform and the parking immediately

surrounding the station. As a result, BART had little leverage to shape land use. Its failure to head off zoning reductions and development limits in cities meant that much of BART's potential for reducing automobile travel was never realized: stations became islands surrounded by parking.

This phenomenon is sometimes called the "BART syndrome," where a community receives the investment in a train station but does not make appropriate planning and land-use decisions to respond to it. The end result is improved transportation connectivity from that community, but a limited land-use response. This outcome significantly diminishes the potential benefits of the public investment in the transportation

system by reducing the number of riders who use it.

Although California's high-speed rail will operate at a vastly greater scale than BART and is not a commuter system, the Bay Area's experience with BART offers important lessons about what to avoid.

Three lessons for high-speed rail:

Capture more land around the station than is needed for the station itself. This gives flexibility for future development.

Don't surround stations with surface parking, or else suffer the consequences of repelling good urbanism and development.

Require an appropriate land-use response from any community that receives the investment of a station.



While high-speed rail has the potential to connect communities across California, the physical, economic and political context for each station and station area is unique and has its own particular challenges. The diversity of California's landscape calls for a degree of flexibility in statewide guidelines. What follows are some observations on the variety of local contexts shaping high-speed rail development across California. The five typologies described here are not intended to capture all station environments but instead provide an insight into the differences in conditions that our planning framework will face.



>> Traditional downtowns and established business districts
(San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento)

In many cases, the proposed high-speed rail station will be located adjacent to or immediately within the city's primary downtown business districts. Several of the stations are in highly successful central business districts — the places of the largest concentration of commercial development in their respective regions. Each of these cities is using the coming of

high-speed rail as an anchor for a new expansion of its respective downtown business district.

San Francisco is constructing the Transbay Transit Center as the Bay Area's terminus for high-speed rail. The Transit Center will include an expanded bus terminal for AC Transit, the extension of Caltrain, and a high-speed rail station. The TJPA is collaborating with San Francisco's Planning Department and Redevelopment Agency to create a new high-density district around the station, with an emphasis on creating new space for jobs. (As of this writing, the zoning requires that 70 percent of the space in new buildings be office space.) Building heights in the district will be among the tallest in the city.

Sacramento's station will be located adjacent to its current downtown on former railyards. As a district with significant state-government-related employment, Sacramento's downtown has struggled to compete for private-sector development in general business services and other industries with nearby office parks and suburban job centers. Yet the closer time connection between Los Angeles and Sacramento could create a new impetus for commercial development in Sacramento's downtown.

Los Angeles is planning for a downtown high-speed rail station at historic Union Station at the northeastern edge of its downtown. Growth around this station would extend the boundaries of its traditional downtown.

San Francisco, Sacramento, and Los Angeles already have light-rail systems that will feed into the high-speed rail station to help generate the additional ridership to make high-speed rail successful. Coupled with supportive land-use policies, high-speed rail could boost the competitiveness of these existing downtown business districts.

>> Emerging downtowns and business districts
(San Jose, Anaheim)

Some fast-growing cities, like San Jose in the Bay Area and Anaheim in Southern California, have traditionally captured a smaller amount of high-density urban development. Much of the development pattern is of a suburban form and their downtowns claim a small share of regional employment.

San Jose is working on a major vision for its Diridon Station area as the entry point to Silicon Valley. The station is over a half mile from the current downtown and offers the city the chance to create a new employment and entertainment hub around the station. Whether the station area development becomes an extension of downtown or a separate node depends on the type of land uses around the station (including total parking) and whether it is conceived of primarily as a business or an entertainment district. As Northern California's largest city, San Jose has the opportunity to establish Diridon and its downtown as a truly regional hub.

Anaheim, too, welcomes high-speed rail for its potential to boost employment, and has provided supportive land-use planning and development incentives to spur the planning process. Given that Anaheim's largest and most



important industry is tourism, the types of land uses near its high-speed rail station are tied to travel and hospitality, including Disneyland and the city's baseball and hockey stadiums.

Both San Jose and Anaheim intend to use high-speed rail as the centerpiece for the creation of a new major downtown district. For these cities, high-speed rail is integral to the creation of a dense center within otherwise fast-growing cities of a more suburban form.



>> Suburban commuter stations
(Gilroy, Murrieta)

Gilroy is a relatively small city located 78 miles from San Francisco and 32 miles from San Jose. Similarly, Murrieta is 66 miles from downtown San Diego and 81 miles from downtown Los Angeles (a trip that can take as long as three hours in traffic). One of the most powerful aspects of high-speed rail is its ability to upend the space-time dynamic. What used to take three hours on congested freeways could take 45 minutes, or less, on dedicated high-speed rail track. Urban growth boundaries or other land-use policies that concentrate growth and prevent development from creeping into the countryside will be especially important

in those communities, which will have access to many more employment opportunities via high-speed rail. These suburban, more commuter-style, station areas will undoubtedly need a lot of parking, but for them to be successful it is essential that that's not all they have. The opportunity for these stations is to be not just parking lots for sprawling bedroom communities of larger metropolitan areas, but important civic, economic and cultural centers for their respective subregions.

>> Airports (SFO, Burbank, Ontario Airport)

High-speed rail is a perfect complement to airline service. In fact, in some European countries airlines and high-speed rail are so integrated that one ticket accommodates both legs of the trip. In California, high-speed rail will make it easier for travelers to access the San Francisco, Burbank and Ontario airports. It could reduce the amount of automobile use at the airport and potentially expand the geographic reach of the airline market, a boon to the mobility of California travelers. The system will also increase airport capacity statewide by reducing the number of shorter flights between the Bay Area or Southern California and the Central Valley, and enable that capacity to be used for longer-haul flights where air travel is necessary.

The land-use response to high-speed rail around an airport is very different from that of a burgeoning downtown business district. An airport rail station is not likely to become a model of walkable urbanism. The key goal is rather to facilitate easy intermodal connections — ensuring an immediate and seamless link between the train and the airport terminal. The land-use response can certainly include hotels, conference centers and other



business-related development. But the focus of the station and immediate area should be on the link to the airport.

One key question for airport high-speed rail stations is how well they end up connecting the airport to nearby downtowns or other centers. For example, air travelers to San Diego's airport will be able to connect quickly via high-speed rail to the University of California San Diego. Similarly, the proposed high-speed rail station at SFO will serve as a quick rail connection between the airport and downtown San Francisco. While SFO already has a BART connection to downtown San Francisco, high-speed rail — if designed appropriately — will be quite a bit faster from terminal to downtown.

>> Market-challenged downtowns (Stockton, Merced, Fresno, Bakersfield)

Cities throughout the Central Valley stand to gain the most from high-speed rail. Not only is the Central Valley set to receive high-speed rail in the first phase of development, but also the new train system will dramatically improve accessibility to places that were previously difficult to access for many Californians. The train system will make a direct physical connection to the coastal

economies as well as link the various urban centers of the Valley to each other. Not only will high-speed rail bring people, markets and firms closer together, but it could also foster development — both good and bad — in areas with available land.

Central Valley cities have the most available land for development and the lowest land values today. Lacking proper land-use controls, these communities are already sprawling far outside their urbanized footprints into surrounding agricultural lands. It is common in city council and board of supervisor chambers throughout the Central Valley to make constant General Plan amendments to convert agricultural or industrial land to primarily residential uses, typically far from nearby services.

While these communities are sprawling at their edges, they are experiencing minimal investment and reinvestment in their historic centers and surrounding early districts, many of which are eminently walkable neighborhoods with tree-lined streets and commercial strips. This is why



the location of the stations in the heart of downtown was a crucial decision to help foster a more compact growth pattern in the Central Valley.

But these cities also face some of the most challenging economic and social conditions in the state.

Unemployment rates are much higher than in the Bay Area and Southern California.

The challenge is that the real estate markets do not support an urban development pattern. In places like downtown Fresno, there has been virtually no private-sector investment in many decades. Getting the land economics to the point where developers think they can get enough return on their investment to rent out office space in mid-rise towers for more than it costs them to build the building is tough. The rents are simply too low.

Cities like Bakersfield have an existing redevelopment plan adjacent to where the high-speed rail station will be located. While the plan's proposals for multi-story residential and nearby office and retail are a major improvement to the prevailing land-use patterns in the area, they are quite moderate in density for what should take place around a high-speed rail station. High-speed rail will certainly increase the desirability of these locations and thus tend to make higher-density construction financially feasible. But it would be naive to believe that the existence of the rail link will solve the problem all by itself. We have only to look at the lack of development next to some of Oakland's BART stations after all these decades of near-instant proximity by BART to downtown San Francisco to see that sometimes access to a growing economy is not sufficient to create high demand.

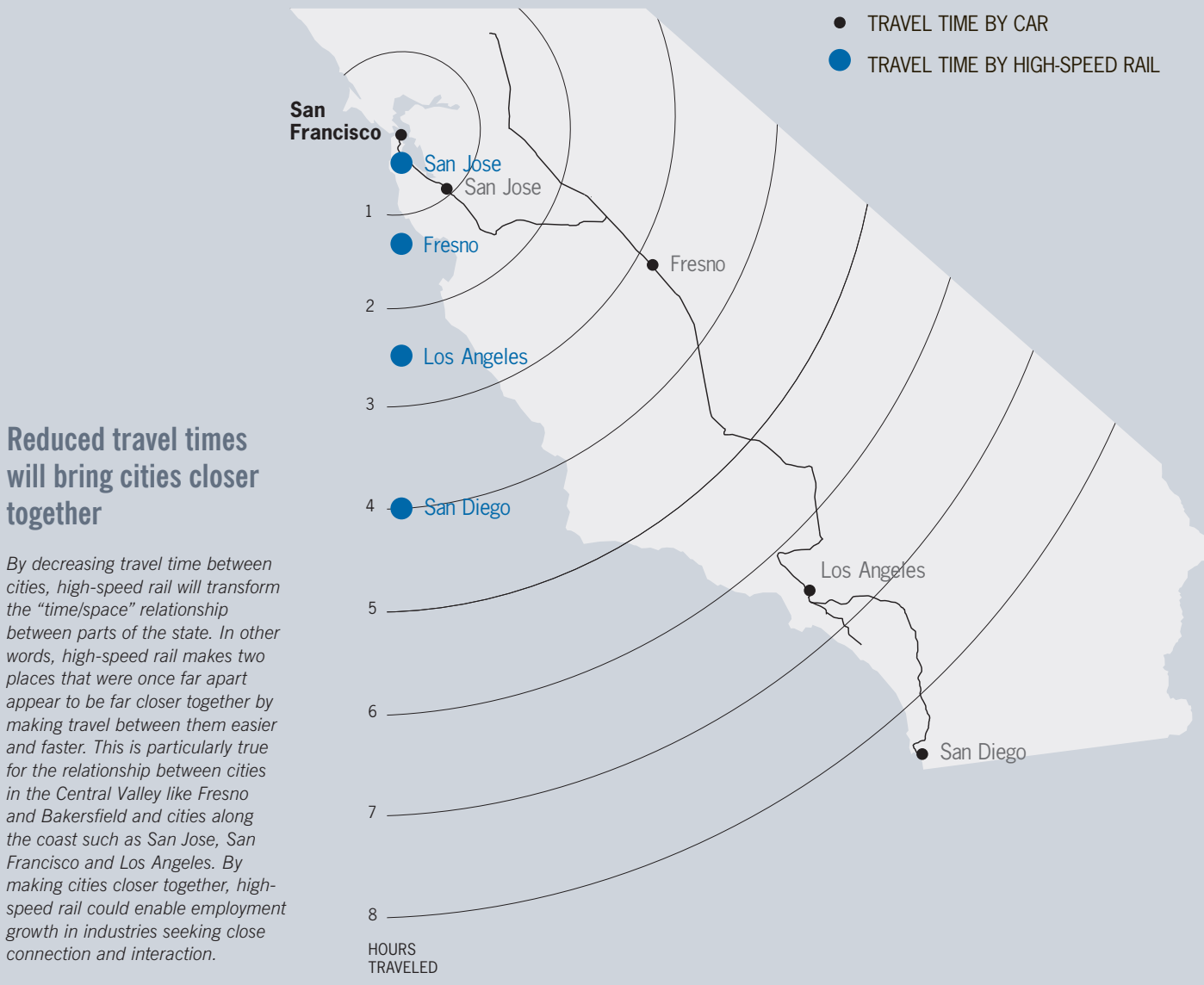
Finding a way to facilitate successful land development in the market-challenged downtowns of the Central Valley is in many ways one of the most important problems that must be solved. Achieving compact, transit-oriented development patterns will require proactive land-use planning and implementation, some of which is described in SPUR's recommendations in this report.

Finally, most California communities have little urban fabric that is built to support non-auto travel. Few cities have established rail networks linking surrounding cities or destinations to high-speed rail stations. This problem is much more acute in California than it is in the Northeast corridor of the U.S., where Amtrak's Acela line links Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington. The simple fact that most of California's urbanization occurred later in time means that we are inserting this rail system into a built environment that is more sprawling and less walkable than most places in the world that have successful high-speed rail systems. We are, therefore, faced with the daunting challenge of retrofitting the buildings, streets, transportation systems, and land-use patterns to be more transit-supportive.

Each of these five constraints is serious and poses a challenge to the implementation of a successful high-speed rail system. But collectively they represent precisely the unusual opportunity of a high-speed rail system. Because of its long-term planning horizon, high-speed rail forces a conversation about future infrastructure and planning needs for the state. It challenges residents to think about mobility in a way that does not always privilege the automobile. It challenges communities to make decisions about investment in historic downtowns and the preservation of farmland or open space at urban edges.

We are not so naive as to assume that high-speed rail can solve these major constraints. But we firmly believe that if we are honest about the challenges, we are more likely to be able to solve them.

TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN CALIFORNIA'S CITIES



SPUR Recommendations

Realizing the vision for high-speed rail described in this paper will require collaboration at all levels of government. In addition to the California High-Speed Rail Authority, there are important roles for local government, transit agencies, special purpose districts, metropolitan planning organizations and several agencies of the State of California. Local government acting alone is not likely to solve all the problems, many of which are significant state and regional issues. Conversely, regional and state entities are equally unlikely to consider all local concerns or understand the uniqueness of the local situation. We therefore make a variety of recommendations at every level of government. Some of these recommendations could be implemented under current laws and regulations, while some would require legal changes.

1. Develop station area plans for each high-speed rail station area.

SPUR recommends that each community with a high-speed rail station should develop a station area plan focused on the immediate neighborhood surrounding their station. While the precise geographies of the planning area will vary for each station, we propose that a half-mile distance from the platform is a good starting place for establishing the boundaries the station area.

Within this half-mile district, cities should strive to focus new development on destination-oriented uses such as office complexes, universities, hotels, convention centers and major retail facilities. Residential development should also be welcomed within this zone but it should not become the majority of development.¹ The destinations near high-speed rail stations are going to draw on visitors from a vast set of residential origins; it is these “destinations” that will benefit the most from proximity to the station.²

Another important element of the station area plan is the planning for intermodal links to allow travelers to connect seamlessly between platform and other transportation such as taxis, light rail, or shuttles. In many cases, the station itself will be the intermodal facility. If not, those functions should be planned and connected immediately adjacent to the station. Within the station there should be a focus on travel-related uses such as retail (ranging from convenience retail to major anchors such as department stores). Parking should be extremely limited and not built with public funds. Most direct station parking should not be in the immediate station area and travelers should arrive at the station on foot, by shuttle, or in a drop-off zone.

Given the structure of California land-use laws, the lead entity to develop and adopt the local station area plan should be the

city where the station is located.³ The plan-making process should include a system for soliciting and accommodating input from adjacent or nearby communities, the county, the regional metropolitan planning organization (such as MTC and ABAG in the Bay Area), the California High-Speed Rail Authority and other state agencies with an interest in the connection between transportation investment and land-use patterns.

2. Draft statewide station area planning and development guidelines to inform the local plans.

While the station areas are diverse, it is important to set statewide guidelines to inform the local planning process. The guidelines for station areas serve two purposes. First, they set minimum standards for local plans.⁴ Second, they provide an aide to local planning agencies on important elements of place-making that will ultimately make high-speed rail more successful.

The lead agency for creating these guidelines should be the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

The guidelines for minimum standards would address topics like minimum densities, maximum parking ratios, etc. The place-making guidelines would address street design standards, including requirements for street connectivity and maximum block sizes as well as street trees, height and bulk for new buildings, ground floor activation strategies, and recommendations for open space, plazas and mini-parks to complement and support pedestrian activity.

Parking strategy may be particularly contentious, and it is important that we get it right. We would suggest that parking should be shared — not dedicated to rail patrons only. Parking should also be distributed, with some remote parking perhaps a considerable distance from the station, just like airports. Finally, parking should never be given the best development sites. In most cases, it probably makes sense to lodge the responsibility for constructing and managing parking in a public authority as an “enterprise function.” This means that public funds could be used for land acquisition and construction, but those public funds would need to be paid back over a reasonable time period, such that all the costs of building and operating parking are paid by user fees.

Each station area should also have a multimodal station access plan that looks at the pedestrian, bike, bus, surface transit, and automobile feeder systems that will bring passengers to and from the station. This access plan should also include additional detail on parking. We include a discussion of the multimodal station access plan as a separate recommendation in item 10 below.

³ There are several stations in unincorporated areas (SFO and Palmdale Airport respectively). For SFO, the City and County of San Francisco will be the lead planning agency. For Palmdale, Los Angeles County will lead.

⁴ The concept of establishing criteria for station area development is increasingly applied to transportation projects. For example, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has established minimum density requirements for new rail and ferry stations in the Bay Area (<http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/rtep/>). The Bay Area Rapid Transit district also has station area planning criteria to guide new development opportunities in the immediate station areas around BART stations (www.bart.gov/docs/planning/TOD_Guidelines.pdf).

¹ While it is not appropriate to set absolute limits at a statewide level, we argue that an overall goal should be to not allow residential uses to be greater than 50 percent of the total building square footage in the quarter-mile area surrounding the station. For some stations, this ratio of residential to non-residential uses should also be applied to the entire half-mile area.

² For more on this issue of the importance of employment centers and business districts as key destinations that can support efficient use of transit systems and high transit ridership, see SPUR's writings in *Future of Downtown*, at http://spur.org/publications/library/report/future_downtown.

3. Draft a station area plan implementation program.

In addition to drafting station area plans, SPUR recommends that all communities should adopt a Station Area Plan Implementation Program. The distinction is important. A plan lays out general land uses and policy goals. An implementation program includes all the key policy changes, including zoning, that must take place in order for the plan to be implementable.

The Station Area Plan Implementation Program would include the following items.

- **Revisions and amendments to the local General Plan** in order to reconcile it with the adopted Station Area Plan.
- **Revisions to local zoning ordinances** to reflect the station area plan policies.
- **Revisions to the local capital improvement program** to reflect the necessary improvements.
- **Proposed post-zoning permit streamlining.** Development consistent with the station area plan and zoning should be able to obtain all necessary permits as-of-right, or as close to it as possible. Discretionary hurdles — such as vague design review, conditional and other use permit requirements — should not be allowed.
- **Revisions to funding sources** (public/private/shared) and financing plan (linked to development schedule). The financing sources could include special assessment districts whereby property owners agree to an additional tax to help pay for a public investment such as additional infrastructure or specific services.
- **A programmatic Environmental Impact Report** such that future development proposals within those bounds can be built as-of-right.
- **Proposed implementation guidelines for development** such as phasing, interim uses (if any), and the timing for infrastructure investment.

The discipline of planning has made itself the butt of countless jokes for its willingness to create the proverbial “plan that sits on a shelf.” It is a truism that documents like station area plans do not implement themselves. The only way this exercise becomes meaningful is if cities do the hard work of implementing the plan, from zoning changes to financing strategies, as described above. We would go so far as to suggest that failure to adopt or follow the Station Area Plan Implementation Program or approve ongoing development projects that meet system criteria might be grounds for the state to ask for the local government to pay back the state for its investment in local planning.

4. Provide local governments with financial support to develop plans that meet guidelines.

Funds for planning in California are limited. As a result, it will be necessary for the state to provide funding to support station area planning around high-speed rail stations.

In addition, if the state provides station area planning funds to local governments, the state can also require that the plans be completed in accordance with state guidelines. We do not believe it is not possible for the state to mandate that local plans are completed

in accordance with state guidelines without providing a financial incentive for local governments.⁵

This state financial support to local governments for planning should be in the form of matching grants or loans from a revolving loan fund to avoid complete subsidy by the state. This approach is currently advocated by the Strategic Growth Council (a State of California cabinet level committee that is tasked with coordinating the activities of state agencies to assist state and local entities in the planning of sustainable communities and meeting AB 32 goals, among other activities).



image: flickr member Enzo JIANG

An appropriate role for metropolitan planning organizations and councils of government (again, like MTC and ABAG in the Bay Area) would be to help cities complete their applications for these funds.

Identifying the actual source of state funds to support planning is difficult. The current budget of the California High-Speed Rail Authority is extremely limited and not designed to support this effort. The State's General Fund is equally or more restricted. One medium-term prospect for station area planning funds would be in any subsequent statewide open-space bond that would go before the voters in California. For example, 2006's Proposition 84 included significant funds for local planning. A future open-space bond could similarly include a portion of funds for high-speed rail planning. Another potential source of funds would be a future CaHSRA bond to additionally fund the system. Since planning costs are minor relative to capital costs and land acquisition for right-of-way, these additional costs for planning will be insignificant to the overall size of any bond and thus unlikely to negatively affect its passage.

In terms of where to locate a grant program at the state level, there are four likely candidates. One option is for this to reside within the California High-Speed Rail Authority. This would be appropriate given that the CaHSRA has the greatest direct interest in the station area

⁵ This is in order to avoid establishing a state-mandated local program that would require the state to pay for the localities' new obligations. The approach here is to offer financial resources and other incentives in exchange for local governments completing plans that adhere to established criteria. There is precedent for this type of approach. The Association of Bay Area Governments' Priority Development Area program allows local communities to nominate parts of their city to be considered PDAs that meet regionally specific criteria. Selection as a PDA then provides access to regional planning funds. See: <http://www.bayareavisoin.org/pdaapplication/> for more information.

outcomes. A second option would be to house a grant program within the California Transportation Commission (CTC), a body responsible for allocating funds for the construction of highway, passenger rail and transit improvements in California. While the CTC has yet to integrate planning for transportation with land use, it would be appropriate for them to set up such a criteria and become more like an enhanced statewide version of a metropolitan planning organization like MTC. The third option would be for a grant program to reside in the Strategic Growth Council, which includes representation from various state agencies and has been the lead agency on funding the state's Sustainable Communities planning grants. Certainly there are other options as well; the point of this recommendation is that we should have frank acknowledgement of the need and desirability of providing state funding for the creation of local station area plans.

5. Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.

While the local government is responsible for drafting the station area plan, it is appropriate for there to be some state review of the plan to make sure it adheres to the established criteria described above. SPUR recommends the creation of a multiagency group that reviews high-speed rail station plans.

The identity and makeup of the reviewing group should accommodate the very broad range of state interests involved. Key to this identity is a familiarity and awareness of the local planning process. SPUR recommends that representatives from the following list of agencies (or types of agencies) be included in the reviewing group:

- CA High-Speed Rail Authority
- State Department of Business, Transportation and Housing
- Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Strategic Growth Council
- California Transportation Commission
- Office of Planning and Research
- A representative local city with a planned high-speed rail station (but not including the particular city whose plan is being reviewed)
- A local transit agency that would interconnect with a high-speed rail station (but not including a transit agency in the particular city or region whose plan is being reviewed)

There are several ways the review process could work. One option is for the statewide group to simply review plans and provide feedback for how the plans could better meet state guidelines. Under this option, the state role is collaborative, not authoritative. A different option is for the statewide group to have a more formal oversight and approval role. Under this option, the statewide group would review the plan and its adherence to statewide criteria and could actually request that the local agency revise and resubmit a plan that does not meet statewide criteria or else repay the grant. Under this second option, the state's ability to request that the local government resubmit the plan is contingent on the local government having accepted state financial support and new financing powers such as access to a portion of growth in the local property tax.

6. Recapture value from future growth to help pay for station area improvements.

Value capture refers to policy tools that “capture” for the public some of the increases in land values generated by a public investment such as a new transit project. The concept is to ensure that the public receives some of the return on its investment as opposed to having all the increased land value accrue to private property owners. In addition, the capturing of the value also enables the reinvestment of those funds back into the area to help pay for infrastructure improvements and other benefits (which in turn increase the land values).

In the case of high-speed rail, there are many needs that could be paid for with value that is recaptured by the public, including upgrades to local infrastructure (streets, roads, sidewalks, sewers, parks), investments in bringing transit directly to the high-speed rail station, operating costs for maintaining transit or shuttle programs, gap financing for particular new development projects, economic development strategies focused on expanding and attracting businesses or for the actual station itself. The use of these funds will vary by the needs of the local community.

We are not recommending that value recapture be used for paying for the basic rail line itself. In a sense, we are assuming the rail line will be paid for some other way. But given the need for significant investment in the station areas and the surrounding communities



image: flickr member gasolub

to make high-speed rail successful, we believe that value recapture mechanisms start to answer the essential question of how to pay for all of the desired improvements.

There are several common methods of value capture: tax increment financing (TIF), special assessments, development impact fees, and joint development. Tax increment financing is a technique that allows the public to capture the growth in a tax stream (usually the property tax) and bond against it to pay for infrastructure improvements. Special assessments are additional charges on property owners or businesses near to a transportation facility (such as a high-speed rail station) that can be used to pay for infrastructure upgrades or additional ongoing services to maintain the area. Development impact fees are used throughout California and are one-time charges

collected by local governments that are used to finance costs associated with new development (such as feeder transit, schools, sewers). Joint development refers to a transit agency working jointly with a private sector developer to build on land owned by the transit agency. Typically the public agency issues a long-term ground lease in which the developer pays the agency money every year for a specified period of time.⁶ All are appropriate for high-speed rail station areas and are commonly used around transit stations.

The focus of this discussion will be on tax increment financing because we believe it has the greatest potential to generate significant amounts of revenue and because it will require some specific changes in state legislation.

There are several tax revenue streams that can be used for tax increment financing—the property tax (which is the most common tax used in TIF), the state personal income tax and the state corporate income tax. There are pros and cons to the idea of capturing the future growth of each of these taxes. The property tax is a locally collected tax where the increment in the growth could be captured locally. The personal and corporate income taxes are state taxes for which the state would have to capture the tax and then dedicate a portion of the increment in growth to high-speed-rail-related purposes.

Property-tax increment financing is common today through redevelopment areas and through infrastructure financing districts. Redevelopment requires “blight” findings while infrastructure financing districts require two-thirds voter approval to form or issue bonds (and cannot overlap with a redevelopment district). In contrast to these two models, we recommend a change to state law to permit local capture of the property-tax increment based solely on the criteria of being within a half mile of a high-speed rail station. In other words, we are proposing tax increment financing to support good station area planning rather than ameliorate blight. It might be appropriate to follow the infrastructure financing district model of capturing only the non-school growth in the property tax in order to avoid a conflict between funding for schools and high-speed rail related development.⁷

Even with this change, the design of this tax increment financing for high-speed rail program would then have to be reconciled with existing tax increment financing programs. Some high-speed rail stations are located in redevelopment areas that already have property-tax increment financing dedicated towards specific projects. Those funds would not be available to be applied in new ways. For these communities, the options would be to either increase the geography of the tax increment financing capture to include the entire half-mile area around the station, or to forgo this tool in favor of another one.

6 For more information on value capture, see studies listed here: <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Research/Featured/ValueCapture/index.html>

7 There is some precedent for attempting to apply tax increment financing to transit-oriented development. In 2005, state Sen. Tom Torlakson introduced Senate Bill 521, which sought to “expand the definition of ‘blight’ to include the economic condition of a lack of high density development within a transit village development” as well as other changes that affected redevelopment agencies. The bill never made it out of committee, primarily because of insistence by legislators that property tax increment revenues be linked to blight. SPUR’s approach here is to build on this idea by eliminating the connection of tax increment financing to blight for high-speed rail station areas.

For both the state personal income tax and the state corporate income tax, we would suggest that the state capture a portion of the increment of growth that comes from communities with high-speed rail stations and apply this to high-speed-rail-related development anywhere in the communities with high-speed rail stations. Since the income tax is a state revenue stream, capturing the increment of growth would not require local approval.

There are several challenges with use of the growth of the income tax. First, any dedication of the growth in the income tax means that that growth would not go into the state’s General Fund. Currently, California counts on the growth in the income tax to help finance the constitutional guarantees for elementary and secondary education. Dedication of remaining growth towards other purposes would reduce the General Fund revenue growth that typically follows growth in personal income. Second, this is a volatile revenue stream. Because wealthier people pay a higher percentage of their income in tax than lower income people, the revenue is more sensitive to the ups and downs of the stock market and other asset-price fluctuations that impact the incomes of wealthy people. As a result of its volatility, it has often been suggested that growth in the personal income tax be dedicated towards one-time uses such as deficit reduction, a rainy day fund — or infrastructure.



image: flickr member Maciej Janiec

Ultimately, the personal income tax is a revenue stream that is not evenly distributed around the state, which is why it is a statewide tax used for statewide purposes. Given the state’s interest in seeing returns on its investment in high-speed rail, it is appropriate for the state to dedicate a portion of its own tax revenues to support economic growth and development in cities with high-speed rail. At a minimum, the state could take the growth in the income tax from communities with high-speed rail stations and use this revenue as an incentive to encourage local high-speed rail station area plans that adhere to statewide criteria — a far less expensive investment than actually building out stations or multimodal access to the stations, for example.

There are similar challenges with the use of the corporate income tax. Collection of the corporate income tax is not evenly distributed throughout the state and it is a revenue stream that some would

rather see accrue in the General Fund.

The ideas we talk about in this paper cost money —from building high-quality public space in the districts near high-speed rail stations, to operating feeder transit service to get to and from the stations, to actually subsidizing transit-oriented development if necessary. Value recapture techniques are not the only way of paying for all of this, but we believe they offer a promising source of funding and a logical place to start.



Image: flickr member Andreas Wecker

7. Establish local development corporations to facilitate station area development.

The power exists today for local communities to establish “local development corporations” to undertake station area development. These entities are non-profit public benefit corporations that are publicly chartered to carry out development. In many cities they already exist to carry out specific public-works projects such as building and owning a new city hall, which the city then leases from the corporation. In these cases, the local city council is also the board of the local public benefit corporation.

An appropriate role for the California High-Speed Rail Authority would be to encourage and facilitate the creation of these entities. Once formed, they could undertake joint development on land owned by the CaHSRA in some places, but more commonly they would develop other land within the station area district.

We are not arguing that every community with a high-speed rail station should have a local development corporation. Instead, we believe that the California High-Speed Rail Authority should help local communities establish one if they are interested. Each board would include representation from the local government as well as representatives from the authority.

8. Establish special focused CEQA procedures for high-speed rail station areas.

All station area plans and major development projects should incorporate the objectives of the California Environmental Quality

Act.⁸ CEQA, which was passed in 1970, requires any major development project to undergo environmental review before being approved. One of the key principles of CEQA is that decision-makers (county supervisors, planning commissioners, and city council members, for example) and the public should be provided with accurate, unbiased information about the effect a proposal will have on the physical environment before they decide to grant a permit or approval. A significant portion of CEQA itself is devoted to determining how much investigation must be done and what type of document must be prepared for each type of project. CEQA documents (EIRs and negative declarations) were intended to be informational tools. Regrettably, over the years CEQA has become another land-use battleground. Project opponents routinely challenge the validity of CEQA documents as part of overall project opposition.

We also observe that the CEQA process does not usually facilitate a thoughtful balancing of impacts (for example, helping decision-makers understand where local impacts may be offset by benefits that accrue at a different scale, for example).

For all of these reasons, and for the simple reason that environmental review of infill development costs a lot of money, CEQA is likely to be a barrier to the completion of high-speed rail station area plans and the approval of specific development projects in station areas.

As a result, SPUR recommends establishing new environmental procedures, including an environmentally enhanced planning process, with environmental content in such local instruments as zoning-based conditional-use permits, an abridged environmental impact preparation process under CEQA, or selective CEQA exemptions in the station area and/or a total CEQA exemption for a period of years for projects consistent with the station area plans.

9. Carry out land banking strategies around high-speed rail stations to support future development and ease land assembly of suitable development sites.

Land banking is a common strategy in down markets when land values are low and have the potential to rise significantly after future investments. Land banking in the high-speed rail station areas is a strategy that could allow the areas to develop and grow across many phases and real estate cycles to capture uses and densities appropriate for station areas of statewide importance. There are several ways to accomplish land banking that would support future development opportunities in station areas.

The most direct strategy is to organize a fund to buy land and hold it in public hands. Another strategy would be to use interim zoning rules to attempt to preclude speculative or insubstantial development on key sites in the station areas. Interim controls are restrictions that could be placed on developments at or near stations to avoid development that might complicate construction of the system or attempt to preempt development opportunities. The drawback to this approach is how to actually define “insubstantial development.” Proposals for moderate density development may be as good as it

⁸ See: <http://spur.org/publications/library/article/moreCEQAdelays07012003>. Also see: www.ppic.org/content/pubs/op/OP_405EBOP.pdf

gets in some station areas. If interim zoning rules end up precluding such development because it is not as dense as the ideal, the station site may ultimately receive less development than if there had been no interim zoning rules in the first place. So interim zoning is a risky strategy with some serious downsides.

Another strategy for land banking would be to allow surface parking adjacent to station areas as an interim use (to ensure some level of high-speed rail ridership in the near term) and a backdoor form of land banking. As has happened at the Pleasant Hill BART station and various stations of the Valley Transportation Authority light rail in Santa Clara County, parking lots can be built on over time to support high-rise development.⁹ Surface parking lots functioning as land banking occurred at Japan's Shinkansen System Gifu station. When enough institutional support was in place and market conditions were "right," development finally occurred at the Gifu station

10. Establish multimodal station access plans that focus on connecting from the station to key destinations beyond the half mile.

Given the limited space immediately around the station, the most significant economic and land-use changes related to high-speed rail will occur in the area beyond the half-mile station area. In fact, most travelers are likely headed to a destination that is in this broader area. As a result, cities should plan for intermodal linkages between stations and destinations up to five or more miles from the station. This broader district should be easily accessible via transit, taxi or a short auto trip. Key destinations in these areas would include, for example, University of California and California State University campuses, other private colleges or universities, international airports, and major existing or planned employment centers.

There are two aspects to this plan for connecting to a broader geography. The first is to develop multimodal facilities and station access plans that accommodate the connection from the high-speed train to other modes. The second is to plan for the connections to the surrounding community by focusing growth along corridors and around key destinations in the surrounding city.

The station access plan should be closely aligned with the station area plan described in Recommendation 1. The local city will often be the lead agency for the development of the plan but would develop the plan in coordination with other local and regional entities (such as transit operators, county congestion management agencies and metropolitan planning organizations). San Jose's Diridon Station Plan is an example of such a station access plan. The goal is to establish a seamless connection between high-speed rail train and other modes (transit, taxi, shuttle, bicycle, and car). In many instances this will also require the creation of a multimodal facility immediately adjacent to or incorporated within the high-speed rail station. San Francisco's proposed Transbay Transit Center is an example of such a station.

In addition to the management of the station plan the CaHSRA or

⁹ In addition the Federal Transportation Agency's new joint development rulings allow transit agencies to sell off land for development (such as land that may house a surface parking lot) even if the federal government paid for the land, as long as the resulting development is transit-supportive.



image: flickr member Bousure

California Transportation Commission should establish station access guidelines, building upon those created by BART, Vancouver, British Columbia's Translink, and other rail agencies. The guidelines should establish minimum standards and recommendations for various features including:

- Sizing and location guidelines for passenger parking, prioritizing the most valuable land adjacent to the station for building development, and spreading parking out to less valuable parcels, including design guidelines for minimizing any negative impact of parking on station area walkability.
- Establishment of enterprise authorities for the construction and operation of parking, so that user fees and not public funds are used to cover the costs of station parking.
- Guidelines on managing parking so that spaces are available to riders at all times, and that parking is shared with surrounding businesses.
- Formulas for estimating the space requirements for bus stops, passenger drop-off and staging areas for taxis, private shuttles, rental car shuttles and other forms of access, and guidelines for allocating curb space among these competing users.
- Guidelines for ensuring convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the station, including bicycle parking guidelines.
- Guidelines for balancing the functional needs of station access with place-making and development needs. For example, it will be important for the plans to lay out the improvements needed to create a good pedestrian realm, from wide sidewalks to good pedestrian lighting.
- Institutional mechanisms for managing and operating the station and its access functions once built.

The second aspect of the intermodal planning focuses on connections from the station to key destinations in the surrounding area and how the presence of the high-speed rail station should be a catalyst for organizing growth around these key destinations in each respective city or region. One strategy would be to focus growth along transit or other road corridors with direct access to the high-speed rail stations. These corridors could be light rail, heavy rail, bus corridors

(some with the potential to upgrade to rail in the future), or even bicycle networks. As we know, bicycle networks are much cheaper to build than transit lines (and their annual operating costs are even lower), so this aspect of intermodal planning should give serious attention to bike lanes (as well as bike parking at stations).

The strategy of focusing growth along corridors could be one of the greatest land-use planning benefits of high-speed rail in places like the Central Valley and would go a long way to curb sprawl. Such cities could benefit by expanding feeder buses into high-speed rail stations, using bus-rapid-transit investments to create transit-oriented corridors that tie into the station.

The focused growth around the other transit stations in the system should support higher ridership on both local transit and high-speed rail. That is, stations should connect a network of destinations whereby riders can travel between important job centers, educational facilities, hospitals, and entertainment.

11. Incorporate high-speed rail considerations into the implementation of SB 375 and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

High-speed rail is an investment with major potential effects on the regions where stations are located. As a result, metropolitan planning organizations should take account of those effects in their planning for SB 375 and in the formulation and updating of their Sustainable Communities Strategy. SB 375 is the land-use portion of the state's climate change law. It seeks to integrate transportation and land-use planning by requiring all major regions to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as a component of the Regional Transportation Plan. The SCS is supposed to identify general locations for all future housing and employment growth and model how such a growth pattern and supporting transportation policies and investments will result in a region with lower greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. For example, the Bay Area's SCS is supposed to identify how to reduce per-capita greenhouse gas emissions from driving by 15 percent by 2035.¹⁰

We recommend that as part of each Sustainable Communities Strategy, the metropolitan planning organization should evaluate high-speed rail station areas as places uniquely suited to accept very high densities.

In addition, each local community and metropolitan planning organization should be encouraged to identify key sites and nodes for employment centers and other major destinations within the existing urbanized areas that are directly accessible to high-speed rail stations via transit corridors. The MPO should thus focus on employment growth in existing business districts as well as around universities, airports, major retail centers and other important destinations. In addition, the MPO should identify opportunities for residential development, particularly for low- and moderate-income households, within this urbanized area and how such residents can access employment opportunities.

12. Enact farmland protection policies and open-space preservation rules that limit the sprawl impact of high-speed rail in the Central Valley.

Protecting valuable farmland and open space is an important goal for all Californians. It is also a distinct concern and issue in the Central Valley where political support for urban growth boundaries and other forms of land preservation has been limited. As a result, SPUR suggests that the state — through both the California High-Speed Rail Authority and other state agencies — should support work in communities with high-speed rail stations to enact farmland preservation measures.

These measures could take many forms.

One option would be to encourage jurisdictions to set up urban growth boundaries. Growth boundaries have been used effectively throughout the Bay Area as well as around the country. Key to that effectiveness is both a willingness to develop more densely within the core as well as a built-in process to review the boundary and adjust it over time.

A second option would be to strengthen the existing Williamson Act. This 1965 law, called the California Land Conservation Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open-space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open-space uses as opposed to full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971. It would be logical for legislation pertaining to high-speed rail land-use planning to include provisions to strengthen the Williamson Act and/or ensure continued funding for it.

A third option would establish agricultural easements to support continued agricultural activity but limit the potential to flip the land to other uses. This approach can be effective but is costly. It also might force certain land to remain in agricultural production even when it is no longer financially viable to continue such operations. Agricultural easements are often pursued by non-profit organizations such as land trusts or the Nature Conservancy. We would suggest it is probably realistic to keep these non-profit organizations in the lead role rather than set up a government agency with the responsibility to buy the easements. However, funding is a real constraint and this option will not gain wider use unless there is a major state funding initiative for this purpose.

A fourth option would be to tie the receipt of planning grant funds for station areas to the preservation of farmland or dedicated open space. For example, if the state has a competitive grant program, the applicant jurisdiction could receive extra “points” if it can demonstrate policies or tools to preserve and protect open space or farmland. Or the state could even require repayment of grant funds received to support high-speed rail planning if the local or regional farmland protection policies are not strong enough.

¹⁰ For more information, see: <http://www.onebayarea.org/background.htm>

13. Correlate future high-speed rail service levels with actual ridership at stations and ongoing local support for station area development.

In order for the goals of this policy paper to be implemented over the coming decades, it is important that the California High-Speed Rail Authority correlate the level of its train service with actual ridership. If the authority selects a station site that ultimately has little development and few riders, it will not be appropriate to have each train stop at that station. As a result, SPUR recommends that the authority manage train operations in such a way to provide an ongoing motivation for good station area planning and development. This means that if there are insufficient riders, the train will not necessarily stop at the station—or will stop infrequently. This approach will be good for the overall system as it will speed up travel and ensure that stops are at places that are important origins and destinations for tens of thousands of Californians.

To accomplish this, it will be necessary to have some objective criteria related to overall ridership and frequency of service. We therefore recommend that the CaHSRA develop ridership criteria to help local communities understand what they need to achieve in order to warrant the massive investment from the rest of the state in providing service to their community.

Conclusion

California's high-speed rail investment is important for the state's economic competitiveness and for more sustainable growth. Key to the success of the system is ensuring that high-speed rail results in real changes in the urban development pattern of the state.

Our vision is for each high-speed rail station area to become a dense and walkable district with significant employment and other important destinations and activities immediately adjacent to the station. Accomplishing this requires local plans that are both written and implemented well, as well as state financial support. Local government will always be the lead agency in developing station area plans. The state role will be to provide resources for planning and incentives that will allow local governments to capture some of the increase in value. There is also a state and regional role in establishing criteria for high-speed rail station areas and providing support and oversight to the local planning process.

This paper does not argue that high-speed rail necessitates a new form of planning in California. But it does require changes to how state and local governments jointly support development. Many of the past tools that have been applied in different circumstances will not be perfectly applicable to high-speed rail.

Ultimately, implementing these ideas will require changes at the local, regional and state level (including new state legislation). There is also the need for a major civic response to high-speed rail and for civic organizations throughout the state to engage in long-term planning and thinking about land-use improvements in the communities with high-speed rail stations. Though the trains are not yet running, it is important to begin the work of changing our policies at all levels to create the right framework for planning and growth.

We are hopeful that high-speed rail can reshape California's development pattern and set us on a path of center-focused growth that reinforces existing cities. This paper is our contribution toward that goal.



image: flickr member Datemarket



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Guide to Implementation

Recommendation organized by lead agency		Action
Cities that will receive stations		
1	Develop station area plans for each high-speed rail station area.	Draft and approve a station area plan, applying the guidelines developed by the State.
3	Draft a station area plan implementation program.	Draft and approve the implementation program (e.g. local zoning changes).
5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Have a seat on the statewide oversight entity (one or more seats reserved for a city, not each city will have a seat). City whose plan is being reviewed would not be able to sit on the oversight entity at that time.
7	Establish local development corporations to facilitate station area development.	City Councils to form Local Development Corporation and become its "board".
9	Carry out land banking strategies around high-speed rail stations to support future development and ease land assembly of suitable development sites.	If appropriate, pass zoning rules to support land banking.
10	Establish multi-modal station access plans that focus on connecting from the station to key destinations beyond the half-mile.	Draft Station Access Plan and plan for growth along corridors leading to station.

California High Speed Rail Authority (CaHSRA)		
5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Set up the oversight mechanism and inviting other stakeholders to participate.
7	Establish local development corporations to facilitate station area development.	Draft model incorporation language for Local Development Corporations and provide technical assistance to local governments seeking to establish one.
9	Carry out land banking strategies around high-speed rail stations to support future development and ease land assembly of suitable development sites.	Provide model zoning language to local governments as necessary.
10	Establish multimodal station access plans that focus on connecting from the station to key destinations beyond the half-mile.	Establish station access guidelines in coordination with the California Transportation Commission.
12	Enact farmland protection policies and open space preservation rules that limit sprawl impacts of high-speed rail in the Central Valley.	Encourage jurisdictions to set up urban growth boundaries. Establish policy to give higher preference for receipt of planning grant funds to cities with appropriate policy tools that preserve farmland or open space.
13	Correlate future high-speed rail service levels with actual ridership at stations and ongoing local support for station area development.	Establish mandate that train service levels should be based on station ridership levels (which is a function of good planning and development in station areas and surrounding city).

California State Legislature

6	Recapture value from future growth to help pay for station area improvements.	Draft new state legislation to enable local capture of property tax increment financing (TIF) near HSR stations and use of personal income tax and corporate income tax increment financing for HSR related investments.
8	Establish special focused CEQA procedures for high-speed rail station areas.	Draft new CEQA procedure specific to HSR station areas.
11	Incorporate high-speed rail considerations into the implementation of SB 375 and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.	Draft policy change to incorporate HSR into Sustainable Communities Strategy (as update to SB 375).
12	Enact farmland protection policies and open space preservation rules that limit sprawl impacts of high-speed rail in the Central Valley.	Draft legislation to strengthen the existing Williamson Act.

Strategic Growth Council

4	Provide local governments with financial support to develop plans that meet guidelines.	Provide funding for planning matching grants.
5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity.

California Transportation Commission (CTC)

5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity.
10	Establish multimodal station access plans that focus on connecting from the station to key destinations beyond the half-mile.	Establish station access guidelines in coordination with the California High Speed Rail Authority.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity.
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California Department of Housing and Community Development

5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity.
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Governor’s Office of Planning and Research

5	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity.
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Metropolitan Planning Organization/Council of Government (such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission or the Association of Bay Area Governments in the Bay Area)

1	Develop station area plans for each high-speed rail station area.	Participate in and provide support for the development of the station area plan. Also will incorporate this planning as part of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.
4	Provide local governments with financial support to develop plans that meet guidelines.	Help cities complete their applications for these funds.
10	Establish multimodal station access plans that focus on connecting from the station to key destinations beyond the half-mile.	Invest in feeder transit and other transportation improvements along corridors connecting from the station to other areas in the city/region. Focus future housing/employment projections along such corridors. Use Regional Transportation Plan to focus investments in connecting from high-speed rail station to other key destinations in the surrounding city.
11	Incorporate high-speed rail considerations into the implementation of SB 375 and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.	Create special focus on high-speed rail station area and connections to station as part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Should reserve some key investments that flow from the Sustainable Communities Strategy to connecting to/from the high-speed rail station.

Nongovernmental and civic organizations

9	Carry out land banking strategies around high-speed rail stations to support future development and ease land assembly of suitable development sites.	Help establish public/private fund to buy land and keep it under public control.
12	Enact farmland protection policies and open space preservation rules that limit sprawl impacts of high-speed rail in the Central Valley.	Establish and manage agricultural easement programs as needed.

Transit operators

2	Establish oversight and certification of local station area plans to ensure they meet planning and development criteria.	Member of oversight entity. Local transit agency must have service that interconnects with a high-speed rail station. This seat on the oversight entity would be rotating such that a transit agency in the particular city or region whose plan is being reviewed would not be on the panel at that time.
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