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Editorial: High-speed rail gets another look

Submitted by SHNS on Thu, 12/10/2009 - 16:24

An editorial / By Dale McFeatters, Scripps Howard News Service

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Without a great deal of fanfare, the Obama administration and Congress have laid the groundwork for a long-sought, high-speed rail network.

The president's stimulus bill contained \$8 billion for high-speed rail and Congress just added \$2.5 billion to that in the omnibus bill that wrapped up government funding for fiscal 2010.

It's still problematic whether that particular train will ever leave the station. There have been false starts on high-speed rail before.

But interested parties are taking no chances. So far 34 states have submitted \$57 billion in proposals to the U.S. Department of Transportation. And in the surest sign that high-speed rail is being taken seriously, since June it has had its own trade group and lobby, the U.S. High-Speed Rail Association. Meanwhile, more than 50 public and private groups have directly lobbied on high-speed rail this year.

The administration defines "high speed" as 110 mph or more, a pace that's almost sedate compared to European and Asian trains that can reach 200 mph and average 150 mph between cities. What passes for high-speed in the U.S. is the 80 mph Washington, D.C.-Boston corridor.

The administration bills high-speed rail, at least initially, as a jobs and stimulus program and DOT says it has commitments from more than 30 domestic and foreign companies that the manufacturing for the program will be done in the U.S. by American workers.

A true high-speed rail network will require a broader vision and a lot more money. The government hasn't put a cost on a network, but the Cato Institute, which opposes the project, estimates that an 8,500-mile moderate- and high-speed network would cost over \$90 billion.

The administration and Congress' enthusiasm for high-speed rail may be prompted largely by the recession. Whether that interest survives a return to prosperity will likely be demonstrated by how much money they put in the pending six-year reauthorization of the surface-transportation act.

(Distributed by Scripps Howard News Service, <http://www.scrippsnews.com>)

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HSR is Essential

Submitted by [Chris Robbins](#) (not verified) on Thu, 12/10/2009 - 20:14.

Under the Oberstar draft of the surface transportation reauthorization high speed rail would get \$50 billion over 6 years. This is the kind of money we should be putting into this essential project, not \$2.5 billion a year. Let's get serious about putting Americans to work and our businesses in motion again and put some of the money being flushed in the Afghanistan conflict back into our domestic infrastructure!

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Family Film: Looking at 'Invictus,' 'Princess and the Frog' and more
[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

A guide to movies from a family perspective:

"Invictus"

-- Rated: PG-13.

-- Suitable for: Teens and up.

-- What you should know: Morgan Freeman plays Nelson Mandela, newly elected president of South Africa, who turns to rugby to unite his racially divided country. Based on a real story, it also stars Matt Damon as a team captain.

Washcall: A civilian ROTC-like program? ... Internet stats ... More
[By LISA HOFFMAN, Scripps Howard News Service](#)

WASHINGTON - Facing a future of empty cubicles when baby boomers retire en masse in coming years, the federal government is scrambling to find a way to fill as many as 300,000 high-skilled jobs in engineering, public health, information technology and other specialized fields.

Williams: Fascinating? Not so much
[By BONNIE WILLIAMS, Scripps Howard News Service](#)

Barbara Walters has reinvented the definition of "fascinating" with some of those on her list for 2009.

Editorial: The greenhouse shakedown
[An editorial / By Dale McFeatters, Scripps Howard News Service](#)

At any U.N. conference, bad ideas are bound to surface, and the Copenhagen conference on climate change turned out to be no exception.

Delegates from 135 mostly poorer nations proposed that the U.S. pay them hundreds of billions of dollars in "reparations" for all the years it generated greenhouse gases without hindrance.

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Forgive us our debts

More Americans are complaining that debt collectors are using shady and possibly illegal practice: to hound them for payments, a Scripps Howard investigation has found. Complaints this year to federal authorities about unscrupulous debt collectors are on pace to be more than 6 percent higher than two years ago.

NEW! Debts packaged and sold, sometimes illegally
NEW! Debt collectors have an advantage over debtors
Complaints rising over shady practices by debt collectors
Debt collectors from NCO make 400 million calls a year

[Scripps survey shows harassment by debt collectors common](#)

[What consumers can do when debt collectors call](#)

[Editorial: Scrutiny needed for debt collection industry](#)

Nursing Home Ratings

A statistical analysis of the federal government's first-ever ratings of nearly 16,000 nursing homes reveals an uneven level of quality across the nation and shows how complicated it is to find a good nursing home.

Federal ratings reveal inequalities in nursing home care
Communication, planning help ease transition to nursing home
Ten things to consider in nursing

Watch: TSA 'manualgate' raises fears of terrorists

By ANN McFEATTERS, Scripps Howard News Service

WASHINGTON - We take off our shoes, our belts, our jewelry, our jackets and our coats. We display our toiletries in quart-sized, zip-top clear plastic bags. (Fold-over, gallon-sized bags are not permitted.) We drop our laptops taking them out of their carriers as ordered. We let strangers go through the stuff in our suitcases. We throw away bottles of liquid larger than 3.4 ounces.

Ambrose: WMD a greater threat to globe than warming

By JAY AMBROSE, Scripps Howard News Service

Need something to worry about maybe 100 or 1,000 or 100,000 times more serious in the here and now than global warming, something that could kill more people in a jiffy than U.S. soldiers killed in World War II, something deemed next door to inevitable in the near, not distant future?

Tucker: Gerhart, Cincinnati symbolize surprising college year

By JOHN TUCKER, Scripps Howard News Service

Toby Gerhart and Cincinnati share a common bond: Both performed way beyond expectations, and became part of the chase for college football glory in a game still ruled by tradition-rich powerhouses.

Editorial: High-speed rail gets another look

An editorial / By Dale McFeatters, Scripps Howard News Service

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The president's stimulus bill contained \$8 billion for high-speed rail and Congress just added \$2.5 billion to that in the omnibus bill that wrapped up government funding for fiscal 2010.

Reynolds: Patriots falling from elite NFL status

By BILL REYNOLDS, The Providence Journal

Dynasties don't end with proclamations and rolls of thunder.

They end like this one appears to be ending, a loss here, a loss there, a loss Sunday in Miami that seems to come out of nowhere, one of those games that never would have happened back in the glory days of this franchise. They end in losing back-to-back games for only the second time in seven years.

Army-Navy college football capsule

By JOHN LINDSAY, Scripps Howard News Service

Capsule preview for Saturday's Army-Navy game in Philadelphia.

ARMY (5-6) vs. Navy (8-4), in Philadelphia, 2:30 (Eastern), CBS.

FAVORITE: Navy by 14.

COACHES: Rich Ellerson (first year at Army) and Ken Niumatalolo (16-10 in second year at Navy).

LAST GAME: Army won at North Texas, 17-13, on Nov. 21. Navy lost at Hawaii, 24-17, on Nov. 28.

It's as much mental as physical for UFC fighters

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home care

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Debt collectors have an advantage over debtors
2 comments

Watch: Not much room for compromise on climate debate
2 comments

Editorial: High-speed rail gets another look
1 comments

Dead Wrong

A seven-month investigation into federal mortality records reveals hundreds of thousands of death certificates filed every year in the United States are wrong, meaning we don't really know what's killing Americans. A first-of-its-kind study also found that younger, well-educated and wealthy people are more likely to be autopsied when they die. More men than women are autopsied. And blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans are more likely to be autopsied than whites.

Autopsy rates differ by race, age sex, education

Cause of death investigations often dead wrong

Accurate death certificates challenged by poor training

Poll: Doubts persist over accuracy of death certificates

Survey results among different groups

Death poll findings, by questions

What to do if you distrust the death diagnosis

Where to find death records

Deaths by heart disease by state

Editorial: We don't know what's really killing Americans

Recycled Radiation

Thousands of everyday products and materials containing radioactively tainted metals are

By SCOTT CACCIOLA, Scripps Howard News Service

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Kenny Florian remembers his debut as a professional in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. He faced Diego Sanchez in the season-one finale of Spike TV's "The Ultimate Fighter" in April 2005, and the contest was over before it began.

Murdock: Reid played 'shopworn' race card in health-care debate

By DEROY MURDOCK, Scripps Howard News Service

NEW YORK - Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada recently played the most shopworn trick in the liberal playbook. While debating health-care "reform," he ferociously deployed the race card.

Reid claimed that "ObamaCare" opponents were like those who "dug in their heels and said, 'Slow down, it's too early. Let's wait. Things aren't bad enough about slavery.' "

RedBlueAmerica: Abortion stirs debate in health reform

By BEN BOYCHUK and JOEL MATHIS, Scripps Howard News Service

The House has passed a health-reform bill that denies federal funding for insurance policies that cover abortion. But this week, the Senate rejected a similar provision. Both sides are digging in, and the fate of reform could well depend on whether the abortion conundrum can be resolved.

Stock-market rebound bodes well for Vegas' fortunes

By LIZ BENSTON, Las Vegas Sun

LAS VEGAS - If paper profits in the stock market fueled trips to Las Vegas during the bubble years, then the collapse of the market in the recession conversely may have hurt business at Strip hotels to a disproportionate degree.

Should barred owls be killed to protect spotted owls?

By JEFF BARNARD, Toronto Globe and Mail

GRANTS PASS, Ore. - Scientists want to determine if killing the aggressive barred owl that has invaded old-growth forests of the Northwest would help the protected spotted owl.

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surfacing across the United States and around the world. But because of haphazard screening, an absence of oversight, and substantial disincentives for businesses to report contamination, no one knows how many tainted goods are in circulation.

Recycled radioactive metal contaminates consumer products

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