



Governor Schwarzenegger inspects South Korea's high speed rail system
Photo: Han Myung-Gu/Getty Images

President Obama speaks with Channel 8's Keith Cate on high speed rail

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Keith Cate, the evening anchorman on WFLA-TV Channel 8 in Tampa traveled to Washington, D.C. to speak with President Obama. The President had invited many local TV anchors to speak with them because he wanted to get his message out to everyone. The video clip of this interview can be viewed to the left of this column.

On the subject of high speed rail, Keith asked him about the system planned for Florida, beginning with the link from Orlando to Tampa.

President Obama stated that the high speed rail was his idea and that in his travels around the world other countries were "cleaning our clock" with their rail systems and their infrastructure in general including roads, ports and airports. He said that local civic leaders across our country were enthusiastic about the plans and are in full support. They believe that it will bring much needed jobs and new business to our state.

In February of 2009 President Obama came to

Ft. Myers to meet Governor Charlie Crist, promising 2.5 billion for the rail system. The event was capped by a warm hug between the governor and President Obama, which was later used successfully to defeat Charlie Crist's run for the Senate. With trillions of dollars of deficit and an extremely weak economy, particularly in Florida, the public rallied to the polls and voted against anyone who ran on the Democratic ticket or whom they perceived as Progressive in their ideology. The Republican Party won huge victories in the House and Senate, and several governorships were won by Republicans who promised fiscal responsibility and plans for job creation.

This "changing of the guard" resulted in the newly elected governors of Ohio and Wisconsin, whose states had been granted federal funds for high speed rail, to turn it down. An additional \$342 million dollars became available for Florida if Governor elect Rick Scott decides to go ahead with the program. This would give Florida nearly \$2.7 billion dollars for the high speed rail, with the residents of Florida **only** having to contribute ten percent, or \$270 million dollars out of their own pockets. Governor-elect Rick Scott has stated that he will make a decision to go ahead with the project only after he has completed a careful analysis of the plan to determine if it would be beneficial to Florida to do so.

An excellent article by Randal O'Toole, senior fellow with Cato Institute, [Slow Death For High Speed Rail](#) analyzes high speed rail projects all across the country. He comments on the politics surrounding the infamous *train to nowhere* in California, and how even the liberal Washington Post had an article that "sounded caution about spending much more money on this obsolete form of travel." Tea Party activists have been instrumental in halting, or at least slowing down, this push to build a 19th century technological dinosaur across this country.

The Federal Department of Transportation's "[livability](#)" vision for our future and a comprehensive report on their [Vision For High Speed Rail In America](#) are linked for reference. The U.S. High Speed Rail Association's web site has an [interactive map](#) with the projected corridor completion dates from 2015 through 2030.

The funding for this 21st century "transcontinental railroad" was provided for in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). Accepting this "stimulus" money would be like winning a brand new house. Although it seems like a great deal at the outset, we would still be on the hook for paying all of the taxes, insurance, maintenance and upkeep on a house that someone else will be renting. We would also be subsidizing a major portion of their rent payments without ever living there ourselves. This is money we do not have and should not spend.

Wouldn't it be faster, easier and cheaper to fly?

Tags: [High Speed Rail](#), [President Obama](#), [FDOT](#), [Livability](#), [Keith Cate](#)