



Full speed ahead: Work on Las Vegas to Los Angeles high-speed rail expected to begin this year

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Connecting [Los Angeles](#) and [Las Vegas](#) via high-speed rail has been talked about for years. But it looks like this is the year when that idea may finally get on track.

According to Brightline West CEO Mike Reininger, groundbreaking on the tracks for the 170-mile route between Vegas and Victorville, California is on schedule to begin later this year. He did not give a specific target date, however, for when actual work would get underway. Once passengers get to Victorville, Brightline says they would connect via MetroLink and take a train that would take them to LA's Union Station.

“The world changed as a result of the pandemic, but we continued to work wherever we possibly could towards advancing the ball,” Reininger said in an interview with the [Reno-Gazette Journal](#). “The project remains a very high priority for us.”

The Vegas to LA route would feature [high-speed, zero-emission electric trains](#) that could reach speeds of up to 200 miles per hour. Brightline says the trip would be approximately three hours. That compares favorably to driving in a car. A [road trip](#) between the two cities typically takes at least four hours, sometimes more if you get stuck in traffic on the I-15.

Flying is much faster, of course, and there are many flight options between the two cities. But Brightline is betting that avoiding the hassle of going to and from LAX and the traffic it involves will make its train service appealing to customers.

The Los Angeles-Las Vegas corridor is incredibly popular. Approximately 50 million one-way trips are made each year between the two cities. Brightline estimates 85% of them are by car or bus. The company sees a great opportunity there, and so does Amtrak. It announced plans to expand service and add rail routes to new cities after [President Biden announced his \\$2.25 trillion infrastructure bill](#) that included \$80 billion to shore up America's railroad tracks. [Amtrak hinted](#) that a train running between LA and Vegas was in the works. The railroad service hasn't had service in the desert mecca for years.

Not everyone is sold on the idea that there is gold to be found along the Vegas to LA rail route. Randal O'Toole, a Cato Institute senior fellow specializing in land use and transportation issues, told NBC News that, "These routes are so heavily covered by airlines, buses and freeways that a passenger train is not going to attract many customers."

The biggest hurdle Brightline, the only privately-owned passenger railroad, faces in making its high-speed rail a reality is financing. The company told the Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority that the pandemic had hurt the company's efforts to raise money to fund the project. Last year, financing for the \$8 billion privately financed XpressWest project was halted by the economic woes brought on by the pandemic. Since then, the stock market's recovery has given company executives hope that things are back on track.