

# SFGATE

## DON'T YOU LOVE A TRAIN?

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High speed rail for California would be such a boon to us. It would improve our lives, the economy and eliminate the concentration of smog from automobiles that fouls the air and pushes global warming. What we used to call Smell A could once again be L. A.

I loved taking Amtrak in Stockton to visit my daughter in Southern California. I could read, play cards, have lunch walk, look at the scenery. It is such a pleasant way to travel. Unfortunately, Kristanne doesn't live in SoCal anymore.

It puzzles me why we have an out of date rail system while other countries with just a fraction of our resources, like Turkey, Poland and Morocco have modern, comfortable rail systems. Switzerland, Japan, France, Germany, and UK have fantastic, high speed state of the art bullet trains and commuter rail systems that get people where they need to go with little hassle.

A majority of working Americans are daily stuck in traffic, feeling road rage and yearning for a better way to get to work.

Our whole economy depends on infrastructure. Yet, we can't get High Speed Rail moving. HSR is electric and we don't have the hassle of getting to the air port, going through the rigamarole of inspection; waiting in lines and using transportation that gobbles up polluting jet fuel. The jobs it would create right here at home makes me want to fire congress for not getting behind HSR.

And, of course, that is where the problem lies. They either have oil money in their pockets or concrete for brains. I'm remembering back to the 1930's when Shell Oil bought the public transportation network in Los Angeles and ripped up the tracks and burned street cars. It wasn't only Shell, but the combined power of Standard Oil, Firestone Tires, Mack Trucks and General Motors who were in on the deal.

Likewise, in the 1990's corporate profiteers mounted a fight to undermine the high speed potential for Amtrak. Guess who funded that? KOCH Brothers Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation and Reason Foundation, that spread the analyses that Amtrak is a pokey slow little train system of little use. They bought politicians with fabricated studies that have systematically starved Amtrak and any progress to HSR. Most Amtrak trains have to shuffle along at 48 miles per hour, instead of 150 miles per hour. THANK YOU CONGRESS.

Of course, naysayers point to Amtrak crashes. Guess what? All modern rail systems have PTC , positive train control systems. But congress imposed some budgetary and ideological restrictions on Amtrak's ability to implement PTC. The people who die in crashes have congress to blame.