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President Obama Lays Out Plans for High-Speed Train Travel

Some Say President's Plan For High-Speed Rail Is Not Worth the Investment

By LISA STARK and KATE BARRETT

April 16, 2009

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The vice president has been commuting on the train between Washington, D.C., and Wilmington, Del., for more than 35 years. The president is envious of Europe's speedy railways. They stood together today to announce their plans to revolutionize U.S. train travel.

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Will the United States finally see the kind of train service that is commonplace in Europe and Asia?
(Getty Images)
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"There's no reason why the future of travel should lie somewhere else, beyond our borders," President Obama said today in laying out the new transportation plans. "Building a new system of high-speed rail in America will be faster, cheaper and easier than building more freeways or adding to an already over-burdened aviation system, and everybody stands to benefit."

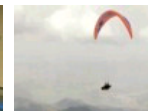
Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today said the plan will "jumpstart a new era in American train travel" and called the investment in train travel an environmental "game changer."

The money needed for the president's plans begin with an \$8 billion "down payment" from the stimulus bill, to be followed, he hopes, by \$1 billion per year for five years, requested in the federal budget to accelerate the program.

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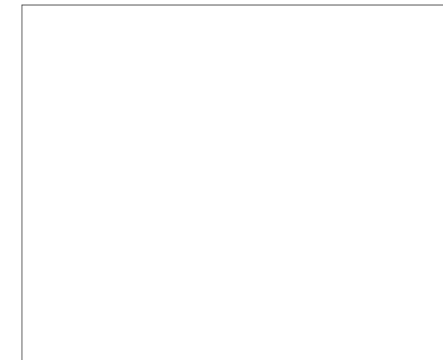
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First on the to-do list is upgrading railways like the one that carries travelers between Washington and Boston on America's only high-speed train, Amtrak's Acela. Next up would be creating new high-speed corridors in places like California, the Pacific Northwest and the Southeast.

The Federal Rail Administration intends to start divvying up grant money for states in late summer.

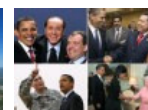
Travelers like Victoria Cassano, who rides the rails twice a week between her job in Washington and her home in New York, is on board with the president's plan.

"I think we should be funding these types of systems," Cassano told ABC News last week. "This is

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