



# High speed rail plans including Ohio's 3-C panned by Heritage group as aid for slow freight trains

By Columbus Government Examiner John Michael



Ohio's \$564 million passenger rail plan to connect its three largest cities with a train whose average speed will crawl along at only 39 mph in some places is used in an expose article by a research fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, as an example of why all the buzz about high speed rail funding will produce little if any truly high speed trains

because virtually all of the funding coming from the White House and Congress will be used to subsidize upgrading freight rail company tracks that will only indirectly benefit Amtrak trains like Ohio wants to use.

In an article published on Columbus Day in [The Cutting Edge](#), Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D, the Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow in the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, wrote that despite the "images of intercity passengers in spacious and comfortable rail cars traveling between cities at speeds approaching 200 miles per hour" the reality is that "such a service is unlikely to ever be available in the U.S. because of the extraordinary costs and because government's so-called HSR initiatives seem unlikely to provide much support for such projects."

Utt writes this on HSR in the US: "Such systems are very expensive to build and also to operate, because they require new, dedicated rail lines built to specific tolerances and levels of durability. Simply put, these levels exceed America's existing roadbeds. And because of this need, the new rail lines would also require the acquisition of significant volumes of land to create the new, secure, right-of-way in which to build the new roadbed."

Utt specifically mentions the Ohio 3-C corridor plan to link Cincinnati-Columbus-Cleveland as

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an example of a very slow train that can never advance to Euro-style high speeds of 220 mph or more because it runs on existing, albeit it upgraded freight rail tracks.

Randal O'Toole, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and author of The Best-Laid Plans and the Cato report, "High-Speed Rail: The Wrong Road for America." may be the most vocal critic of the Obama administration's plan for HSR.

O'Toole emphasizes the subsidy everyone will end up paying to subsidize the roll out of plans, like Ohio's, that when built and operating will demand yearly public subsidies that states like Ohio have no money in their budgets for.

In a related article appearing in The Columbus Dispatch, Ohio's chief rail proponent, Matt Dietrich of the Ohio Rail Development Commission, says that while the competition for a slice of the high speed rail funding pie is tough -- some say the funding pie is 712 percent oversubscribed -- he says Ohio's plan merits funding.

But the very reasons he cites to fund it might also be used to not fund it. Ohio has not had a passenger train run the route in nearly 50 years, and has done little over five decades to be ready for this funding cycle. Adding slow trains, operational subsidies, lack of

availability of train sets, no accounting for positive train control costs and no formal agreements with freight railroads to use their tracks, Ohio is far behind other states like California, where voters approved a \$10 billion bond package to help pay for a plan rail officials there say will cost \$45 billion but independent experts say could reach \$81 billion when the reality of real costs are realized.

Other articles reporting on Ohio's 3-C passenger rail plan are [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).



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