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Obama wants \$13 billion for high-speed rail

By [Joseph Weber \(Contact\)](#) | Thursday, April 16, 2009

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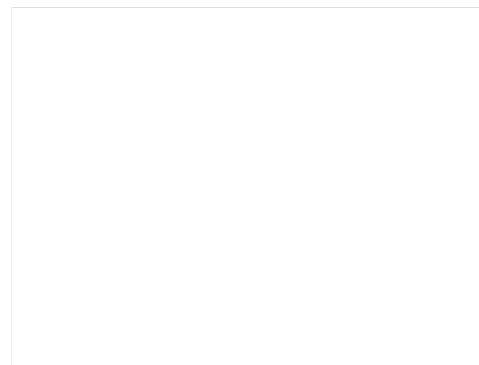
Print	President Obama said Thursday he wants to spend \$13 billion for high-speed rail systems throughout the country to create jobs and reduce gridlock and pollution.
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"Imagine boarding a train in the center of a city," Mr. Obama at the White House press conference. "No racing to an airport and across a terminal, no delays, no sitting on the tarmac, no lost luggage, no taking off your shoes. This is not some fanciful, pie-in-the-sky vision of the future. It's happening now. The problem is that it's happening elsewhere."

The president cited France, Spain, China and Japan as world leaders in high-speed rail transportation, including Japan's second-generation system with trains capable of reaching speeds of 300 mph.

The plan isn't without detractors. Randal O'Toole, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute, said high-speed rail is only marginally faster than existing rail systems and less environmentally friendly than stated.

"Americans who have ridden French or Japanese high-speed trains often wonder why such trains won't work here," Mr. O'Toole said. "The problem is, they don't work that well in France or Japan."



The term "high-speed train" generally means those that can go roughly 100 mph.

The president's plan will focus first on upgrading existing rail systems, then creating 10 major corridors throughout the country.

He said some groups already have submitted plans, but funds for projects will be awarded on merit, like the system for infrastructure money in the stimulus package.

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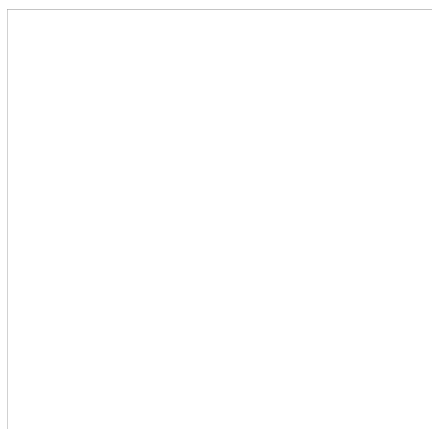
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