



# Research Brief

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## High-Speed Rail in Pennsylvania

MIDDLETOWN, PA—Is high-speed rail in Pennsylvania's future? There is a world-wide movement to embrace the concept of high-speed rail as a major component of a 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation system, according to Dr. Jeremy Plant, professor of public policy at Penn State Harrisburg.

A new monograph by Dr. Jeremy Plant and published by the Pennsylvania State Data Center, looks at the history of high-speed rail. This report, *High-Speed Rail in Pennsylvania*, also looks at the arguments for and against high-speed rail and draws conclusions and recommendations.

Dr. Plant further states:

- < High-speed rail (HSR) is a realistic transportation option that deserves serious consideration in Pennsylvania. HSR is already in operation on the Northeast Corridor line of Amtrak through the Philadelphia area and is planned to be extended between Philadelphia and Harrisburg.
- < HSR can employ either conventional steel wheel on rail technology or magnetic levitation propulsion (maglev). The two systems are not interchangeable. Thus the decision on method of propulsion is the most critical choice facing development of HSR.
- < HSR funding can come from state, federal, or private investments, either singly or in



combination. Most advocates of HSR have lobbied at the federal level, but much of the support for HSR comes from states with well-defined rail corridors. These states include Washington, California, Texas, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

- < HSR systems are in operation in a number of developed nations, and planning is underway to invest in HSR in emerging industrial nations such as the Republic of Korea and Taiwan. HSR systems in operation all utilize advanced electrified rail technology, with maglev systems still in the planning stages.
- < HSR requires a systems perspective to be successful. In addition to investment in train sets, there must be a total elimination of at-grade highway crossings, advanced signaling, improvements in roadbed, and no sharing of tracks between HSR trains and freight operations.
- < HSR systems must compete with two successful existing alternative modes: private automobile travel and air transportation. It is important to target one or the other as the major competitor and tailor the HSR system accordingly.
- < HSR competes for attention and resources in the transportation policy arena with a number of other desirable objectives. Its advocates must clearly identify why investment in HSR is a better use of funds than other discretionary options, such as telecommunications, intelligent transportation systems (IST), and demand-reduction programs.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the Commonwealth's official source of population and economic statistics and services. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's national State Data Center Program.

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