

## Wade: High-speed rail means jobs for state

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Michigan, cradle of the U.S. auto industry, is getting on board for the next big thing in transportation: high-speed rail. It promises to bring about the biggest advancement in our country's transportation network since we carved out our interstate highway system. Like the interstate, high-speed rail will boost our mobility and productivity.

Michigan has applied for \$830 million in federal grants to fund a high-speed rail system linking metro Detroit to Chicago. Gov. Jennifer Granholm said the system would enable trains to go 110 mph and travel from Detroit to Chicago in four hours - two hours less than the current train trip on that route.

Granholm said high-speed rail would give Michigan residents a new, energy-saving transportation option for business and recreational trips.

Granholm also wants Michiganders to follow their manufacturing heritage and make high-speed trains.

Michigan is one of nine states that are laying the groundwork for the Midwest Regional Rail System. This initiative, in development for 13 years, calls for a 3,000-mile regional network that will be hubbed in Chicago. Trains will operate at speeds of up to 110 mph to connect towns and cities along key 100- to 500-mile corridors, using existing rail rights of way.

Michigan's segment of the regional network will run from Pontiac to Detroit and then west to Chicago.

A 2006 study by Transportation Economics & Management Systems and HNTB provided a detailed study of the economic benefits that will result from the Midwest Regional Rail System. Those benefits will be huge, especially in the areas surrounding train stations.

On an aggregate basis, the Midwest Regional Rail System will create about 58,000 new jobs, including 6,970 in Michigan, as the system is built over 10 years. Michigan urban household income is expected to increase by \$138 million, and greater development potential is expected to boost Michigan property values by \$680 million.

The efforts under way in Michigan and the Midwest dovetail with national goals. The federal government has earmarked \$8 billion in stimulus money for high-speed rail.

In addition, President Obama has proposed \$1 billion a year for five years to fund high-speed rail. The House has proposed \$4 billion a year.

What we need is a strong, multi-year federal funding program, like the one that gave us our interstate highway system. Michigan and other Midwestern states are helping to lead the way toward the realization of that goal.

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