



America's High-Speed Rail Aspirations Remain Strong

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Feb. 18 /PRNewswire/ -- New America THINKS survey results from **HNTB Corporation** illustrate transit and passenger rail remain top of mind after the Obama administration's \$8 billion high-speed rail grant announcement last month.

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Nearly nine in ten (88 percent) Americans are currently open to high-speed rail travel for long-distance travel within the United States. While this is a strong majority, that support is down slightly from the 94 percent America THINKS recorded in March 2009.

"The time has come for high-speed rail," said Peter Gertler, HNTB high-speed rail services chair. "Stimulus money is seeding initial projects. It'll be up to those of us in the industry -- working in partnership with transportation agencies and elected officials -- to keep up the momentum."

Gertler said such advocacy efforts are crucial at a time general excitement about high-speed rail has slowed. Americans were far more likely to choose high-speed rail over driving or flying for a trip to a city in their region in March 2009 than February 2010 (54 percent versus 38 percent).

"The pain we all felt when gasoline was hovering near \$4 a gallon has receded," Gertler said. "Yet we can't stand by for the next crisis to hit to address the underlying issues of congestion and our dependency on limited fossil fuels."

While general interest may have slowed, there's still a great deal of support for passenger rail enhancements overall. More than four in five (83 percent) Americans agree public transit and high-speed rail infrastructure should receive a larger share of federal funding than they do now.

"While our interstate highways empowered economic growth and development during the last 50 years, we can no longer simply build our way out of congestion and conservation

problems," Gertler said. "Establishing a long-term multi-modal transportation vision that includes rail is crucial."

Liz Rao, HNTB national public transit services chair, agreed. "**The U.S. Department of Transportation** recently shifted its criteria when evaluating transit proposals for federal funding to consider environmental and economic development benefits as well as congestion relief. Such a focus will allow us to improve our communities' quality of life as well as make better use of limited resources."

About the survey

HNTB's latest America THINKS survey polled a random nationwide sample of 1,007 Americans Feb. 1-7, 2010. The previous high-speed rail survey was conducted March 18-23, 2009. They were conducted by **Kelton Research**, which used e-mail invitations and online surveys. Quotas were set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population ages 18 and over. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent.

About HNTB

HNTB Corporation is an employee-owned infrastructure firm serving federal, state, municipal, military and private clients. With nearly a century of service, HNTB has the insight to understand the life cycle of infrastructure and the perspective to solve the most complex technical, financial and operational challenges. Professionals nationwide provide award-winning planning, design, program management and construction management services. For more information, visit www.hntb.com.

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