Chapter 10
High Speed Rail: Study, Report, Current, and Future Considerations

Raj Selladurai
Indiana University Northwest, USA

George VandeWerken
Providence Bank, USA

ABSTRACT
This chapter focuses on the recent Southwest states’ multi-state planning collaborative study, which the Federal Railroad Administration initiated, coordinated, and released in 2015. It highlights the process, planning contextual factors, conclusions, recommendations, and implications, which may serve as a reference model for future studies in other regions of the U.S. The chapter also looks at the momentum of high-speed rail in the U.S., especially in California, and explores some of the considerations in moving toward more optimal and comprehensive transportation planning and policy development for high-speed rail for the U.S. in the future.

INTRODUCTION
High-speed rail is gaining momentum in many countries, including the United States -- especially in the states of California, Florida, Texas, and other travel corridors. Dumaine (2015), in his report, has stated that plans for bullet trains in the United States are “gathering steam” and “projecting” superfast forward toward potential
implementation. The study cited several emerging factors such as growing populations, crowded, congested highways, and the new generation’s apathy toward cars and car ownership that have stimulated and encouraged a new passion and interest in high-speed rail, especially in some southern states. As a further indication of an apparent changing national sentiment, the U.S federal government has recently approved a $28 million grant for a Maryland feasibility study to develop an unprecedented, superfast 300 mph Maglev train from Washington D.C. to New York City. This train would complete the trip that currently takes at least three hours in less than one hour (Kelly, 2015).

Kanter (2015), a Harvard University scholar, observed that Japan and other countries like Germany, France, and China have invested heavily in high-speed rail and new, state-of-the-art infrastructure for passenger rail systems, whereas the U.S. has chosen to focus on highways and still relies on 19th century rail infrastructure. This has resulted in some major problems related to safety, congestion, and service failures in the US, which have affected our economy, health, and overall quality of life. Kanter further recommended that passenger rail in the US should emulate its counterpart in the freight transportation rail area where the US is considered a model leader for the rest of the world. Private companies such as CSX can invest in new infrastructure and other related developments due to their significant growth in the freight area. Perhaps we need a blended approach of private and public funding/support of passenger high-speed rail to keep up with the similar blended efforts being carried out successfully in the freight area.

Another recent report has focused on the fast development of a rail service in Toronto, Canada called the UP Express, a premium airport express train linking Toronto Union Station to Toronto Pearson International Airport (Cross Rail Chicago, 2015). Interestingly, Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and his Chicago leadership are looking closely at this Canadian rail model while considering similar rail service proposals connecting Metra to a station near O’Hare airport in Chicago.

Further, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has recently released its “Corridor Alternatives Analysis Technical Report” for the Dallas to Houston high-speed rail project. Proposed by the Texas Central Railway (TCR), this report evaluates potential corridors, stations, and different types of related services. The proposed project would span a 240-mile corridor, on dedicated high-speed rail track, which means it would be used for passenger rail service. The route would be built and operated by TCR, a private company, and would be able to move passengers between the cities of Dallas and Houston in 90 minutes by 2021 (Federal Railroad Administration, 2015).

Several timely reports and findings have highlighted the benefits of high-speed rail, especially as projected for California, and have further enhanced the momentum for high-speed rail. In a recent focus group study conducted at a local university
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