

## Phoenix wants to get on bullet-train map

by *Sean Holstege* - Oct. 8, 2009 12:00 AM  
*The Arizona Republic*

When Phoenix-area transportation leader Dennis Smith first saw a map depicting the nation's high-speed rail strategy, he immediately noticed what he called "a gaping hole in the intermountain West."

So did regional and rail planners in Denver, Las Vegas, Reno and Salt Lake City.

On Monday, Smith and those planners met in Phoenix as the Western High Speed Rail Alliance, a new group whose aim is to develop a network of rapid intercity trains. They were keenly aware that \$8 billion in economic-stimulus money is being steered to other regions.

"If you don't have a line on the map, you're nowhere," said Smith, executive director of the Maricopa Association of Governments. "This is about: How does the fastest-growing region get politically aligned?"

Two new independent studies will give Phoenix more credentials to make its case.

Today, the Brookings Institute, a liberal-

leaning think tank in Washington, D.C., releases an airport-congestion study in which researchers found that Phoenix to Los Angeles is the third-busiest short-hop travel corridor, with a distance that would make high-speed rail competitive.

Independently, a research group called America 2050 released a report last month evaluating which high-speed rail routes made sense. The organization looked at populations, densities, economies, transit networks, and air and highway congestion of U.S. cities. Among 27,000 city pairs, Phoenix to Los Angeles ranked 15th.

That's higher than the Los Angeles-to-Vegas run and several others included on federal planning maps. Phoenix to San Diego ranked 22nd.

A typical high-speed train, common in Europe and Asia, would get you from downtown Phoenix to the heart of Los Angeles in just over two hours.

A high-speed rail system in the U.S. is many years from reality. And not everyone is enamored of fast trains.

Some fiscal conservatives argue the country cannot afford the multibillion-dollar price tag. Others are deeply skeptical of

Advertisement



**9/17: Homeowners Fail to Take Advantage of Gov. Refi Plan**  
**\$90,000 Mortgage for Under \$499/Month!**  
[RefinancingNow.org](http://RefinancingNow.org)