

Quick Take

What:

High speed rail: A transportation mode operating on grade-separated tracks and carrying passengers at more than 110 mph or on at-grade tracks at speeds up to 110 mph.

Significance:

High speed rail is an economic engine that would quickly connect urban areas via ground transportation. A privately funded effort is underway to try to bring high speed rail to the Dallas-to-Houston corridor, which would connect two of the largest metropolitan areas in the country in a new way. A separate effort has been undertaken to introduce high speed trains in the Fort Worth-to-Dallas corridor, which could eventually connect North Texans to Austin and San Antonio.

Inside the Numbers:

90
minutes

The approximate travel time from Dallas to Houston aboard a high speed train.



Thinkstock photo

High Speed Rail Will Connect Texans

Imagine boarding a train and zipping down to Houston in 90 minutes. Texas Central Railway is leading a privately funded effort to make that scenario a reality by 2021. The line is part of a larger effort to bring a high speed rail network that could one day link many of the state's largest cities.

The Dallas-to-Houston project has received a great deal of attention. Connecting the fourth- and fifth-largest regions in the US would lead to increased economic development and job creation. Texas Central Railway is proposing to pay 100 percent of capital, operations and maintenance costs. The environmental review process has begun, with the goal to have it completed by 2016.

Two types of high speed rail are under consideration in Texas. High speed rail operating on at-grade tracks allows there to be some freight train activity and roadway crossings. High speed rail that operates on grade-separated tracks involves the avoidance of crossing conflicts by making any roads crossing the line either pass under or over the railway.

The Dallas-to-Houston line is a prime candidate for grade-separated high speed rail, which will support trains traveling faster than 110 mph. These lines have few stops along the way, allowing passengers to reach their destination more quickly.

Work is underway to study the high speed rail possibility along a 35-mile local corridor between Fort Worth and Dallas, which would allow residents on both sides of the region quick access to Houston. Whether this would be grade-separated, at-grade or a combination of both has not been determined. Together, the Dallas-Fort Worth regional effort and the Dallas-to-Houston intrastate project would link regions of more than 6 million residents by train, providing another option for business and recreational travelers.

FACTSheet

Lines connecting Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston are seen as part of a larger network that could provide service to other points in the state and beyond. This future network could include Oklahoma City and San Antonio, as well as East Texas and Shreveport.

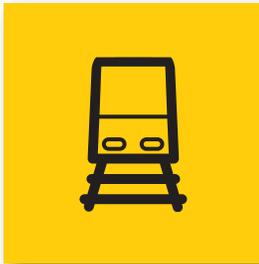
Although there are separate projects underway to deliver high speed rail to Texas, the Dallas-to-Houston and Fort Worth-to-Dallas projects are hoped to be ready at the same time, creating the initial pieces of a seamless rail network.

Partnerships have been established involving the Federal Railroad Administration, Texas Department of Transportation and the North Central Texas Council of Governments to help deliver the projects.

NCTCOG is prepared to assist with demographics and transportation system integration for both the public- and private-sector efforts, allowing the agency to put its planning expertise to work to help make high speed rail a reality.

Population growth of Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston will make this connection a positive for residents of each region. The Dallas-Fort Worth population is expected to grow to more than 10 million by 2035. Houston is projected to grow to nearly 9 million by then.

Work will continue by both the public and private sectors in an effort to bring high speed rail to Texas, and it will be done as a complement to other forms of transportation, whether they move people along the ground or through the air.



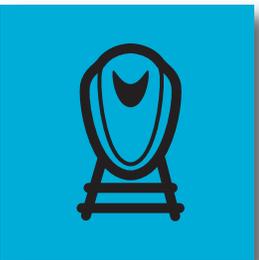
Commuter Rail – up to 79 mph

A passenger train used for local or regional service primarily operating between a city center and surrounding communities. It contains at-grade crossings which can include train and roadway intersections.



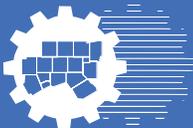
Higher Speed Rail (At-Grade) – 79-110 mph

High speed rail operating on at-grade tracks. It contains some intersections where railway lines cross train or roadway facilities at the same level.



High Speed Rail (Grade Separated) – 110-150+ mph

High speed rail operating on grade-separated tracks. There are no crossing conflicts because trains and other traffic pass either under or above the railway. Avoiding crossing conflicts is crucial to the safe operation of grade-separated lines.



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