

Economic Development and High-Speed Rail: How Market Access and City Size Influence Development Opportunities

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High-speed rail (HSR) holds the potential to transform intercity transportation in the US. However, discussion of the economic effects of these investments has been dominated by the costs of providing the infrastructure and the complexities of their operations. The benefits of HSR are most often portrayed in terms of travel time savings. But there are very important effects attributable to improved market access that need to be properly analyzed, along with the typical allocative (distributive) and generative economic impacts usually addressed in assessing the economic impacts of transportation infrastructure projects. This paper will examine the contributions of improved market access attributable to HSR system. It will show how the magnitude of these effects changes with the speeds at which HSR networks are operated. And, it will describe the importance of HSR to the economic development of various city sizes and use case studies to show how the sectoral mix of metropolitan areas served by HSR routes influences economic impacts and development opportunities.