

dollars was appropriated for the Next Generation High Speed Rail Program which included five million for corridor planning. For FY 1996, the Administration requested \$68 million for the Next Generation High Speed Rail Program and the High Speed Ground Transportation Research and Development.

Finally, the HSGT policy development will consider the results of a study of the potential performance and commercial feasibility of HSGT. The report, to be transmitted to Congress in 1995, will identify types of HSGT systems that would be most beneficial in various markets. It will also identify the challenges that will need to be addressed in order to implement HSGT in the U.S.

Both the High Speed Ground Transportation Commercial Feasibility Study Report to Congress (Report) and the National HSGT Policy are required by Section 1036 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) [49 U.S.C. 309(d) and (e)].

The Report will examine several illustrative corridors to obtain an understanding of the potential for HSGT around the nation. It will consider several types of HSGT technology systems, including Accelerail; new high speed rail (new, electric, dedicated high-speed only rail lines, 200 miles per hour); and Maglev (magnetic levitation vehicles on new lines, 300 mph). The Report is not a replacement for the more detailed analyses of individual corridors by state and local governments. It will, rather, be an assessment of HSGT potential in the U.S. as a whole, to guide national policy makers in HSGT-related decisions.

Section 1036 calls for the Policy to include "provisions to promote the design, construction, and operation of high-speed ground transportation systems in the United States."

The public will be invited to participate fully in discussions at these regional outreach meetings. The public is also invited to submit written comments on any subject relevant to the Policy before, after, or during the meetings, but public input on certain questions is of special interest to FRA. The principal questions are listed below, and FRA encourages the public to comment on these questions on the basis of each region's specific experience with transportation and HSGT issues.

Among the topics to be considered in the Policy, and at the regional outreach meetings, are:

(1) The Role of HSGT in the National Transportation System

Commenters on this topic are invited to consider:

(a) Can HSGT fill transportation needs in a cost effective manner not met by your region's current transportation system?

(b) What HSGT technologies are being considered, for what kinds of markets [short-term and long-term] in your region?

(c) How extensive a system makes good economic or financial sense in your region?

(d) How would your regional HSGT system be connected to the rest of the transportation system?

(2) Planning for HSGT

Commenters on this topic are invited to consider:

(a) Is your region using existing conventional rail service to prepare a market for HSGT? How?

(b) Does the presence of conventional rail service, including commuter rail, offer benefits to the regional HSGT system?

(c) To what extent and how are corridors suitable for future HSGT being preserved in your region?

(d) To what extent is there planning for joint public use transportation corridors in the region (e.g., highway and HSGT)? What are the obstacles and potential solutions?

(e) How will intermodal connections, such as transit lines to existing stations and right-of-way acquisitions near airports be planned for your HSGT system?

(f) What factors are key to the planning and implementation of interstate HSGT projects?

(g) What should be the roles of the Federal, state, and local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and the private sector in HSGT planning, construction, and operation in this region?

(3) Funding HSGT

Commenters on this topic are invited to consider:

(a) What non-Federal funds (local, State, private) are being used and considered for implementation in your region?

(b) What other sources of non-Federal funds (current or future) would you recommend to support HSGT for your region? (i.e., fuel tax, user fees, state/local government grants or loans, impact fees, private efforts and debt.)

(c) Federal law currently allows the issuance of tax-free bonds to finance HSGT projects for 150 miles per hour operation and above. If this were to

include HSGT projects below 150 m.p.h., would this type of financing be utilized for HSGT in this region?

(d) What are the obstacles or impediments to the funding of HSGT projects under the current ISTEA legislation?

(e) How extensively would the Secretary's proposed unified allocation of funds for transportation investment be used for HSGT in your state or region?

(f) How could the Secretary's proposed program provide additional leverage for private capital to participate in funding HSGT projects?

(g) How could the new program structure be used most effectively to foster the kind of HSGT investment envisioned in your region?

(4) Implementing HSGT

Commenters on this topic are invited to consider:

(a) How should the issue of liability for host railroads be dealt with? Should insurance be purchased for HSGT operations? Should total liability or punitive damages be capped by statute? Should this be accomplished at the Federal or State level?

(b) Does the mechanism now embodied in Section 403(b) of the Rail Passenger Service Act (State-assisted service) provide an appropriate way to upgrade current corridor services to higher speeds?

(c) What should be the role of Amtrak in HSGT? Should State HSGT sponsors have the option of choosing another provider of the service and, if so, should the other provider have the same rights vis-a-vis the owning railroad that Amtrak now has?

(d) Are special arrangements needed with the private railroads to insure the future availability of excess rights-of-way and capacity for HSGT in this region?

(e) What sorts of labor issues are raised by HSGT projects, and do Federal laws related to rail labor need to be changed for HSGT service?

(f) What types of new technologies are important to the development of HSGT in this region?

(g) What should be the nature of Federal HSGT technology development and demonstration activities? What should be the State role in this region?

(h) What other actions should be taken to promote a U.S. HSGT industry? The possibilities include defense conversion projects, Buy American requirements, and tax policies.

(i) How should policies to promote a U.S. HSGT industry be gauged against the efficiency of using currently available foreign technologies?