

Implementing ARRA

Design Snapshot

Bay Area's High Speed Rail Plans: Advancing 21st Century Regional Transportation

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A collaboration of Bay Area political leaders and transportation officials have developed a \$1.9 billion proposal for ARRA's high speed rail funding to help accelerate the arrival of new, fast, 21st-century train service from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The plans focuses on the upgrades and technologies along the greater Bay area corridor that would not only pave the way for eventual high speed rail service but also enhance the safety, capacity, and performance of existing regional train operations.

California's High Speed Rail Plans	
Purpose:	To pave the way for a new regional high speed rail line while enhancing current commuter train operations
Lead entity:	Metropolitan Planning Organization
Partners:	City and county governments and regional transportation authorities
ARRA focus:	High speed rail
Scale:	Region (three counties)
Strategies:	Reflects a long-term regional vision; adopts multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral approaches
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California's ARRA proposal for regional high speed rail comes after more than a decade of planning and discussion around a grand vision to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles with new, fast train service. With the availability of federal stimulus dollars, regional transportation leaders gained momentum in coming to consensus on some concrete decisions about initial investments to advance high-speed rail in the Greater Bay Area. They put forth a [\\$3.4 billion plan](#) for a series of projects between San Francisco and San Jose to electrify the rail lines of the regional commuter service, Caltrain, upgrade key stations, modernize train-control equipment, and better separate train and vehicular traffic. To cover project costs, a \$1.9 billion ARRA application to the high speed rail

program would leverage additional local resources, including a \$9 billion bond measure approved by Bay Area voters for high speed rail.

Overcoming the highly localized nature of regional transportation decisions, the ARRA plan for a San Francisco/Silicon Valley high speed rail corridor reflects multi-jurisdictional and multi-institutional collaboration. Both the mayors of San Francisco and San Jose, the two largest Bay Area cities, are behind the plan. Other partners include the county of San Francisco, the [San Francisco County Transportation Authority](#), the [Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority](#), the [Caltrain Joint Powers Board](#), and the [Transbay Joint Point Powers Authority](#), which heads the effort to build a new transit center in downtown San Francisco. The whole collaboration is lead by the region's metropolitan

planning organization, the [Metropolitan Transportation Commission \(MTC\)](#) that united the varied interests of these different stakeholders to align their priorities about where the new high speed rail line should go and which specific projects should be included in the ARRA application. Now fully flushed out, these ARRA plans may face another hurdle at the federal level depending on how the [Federal Railroad Administration](#) interprets the guidelines calling for high speed rail projects for intercity corridors as opposed to commuter routes. While categorized as a commuter line, Bay Area's Caltrain route is a significant regional corridor and is part of California's statewide high speed rail plans.

To achieve consensus around the high speed rail plan, leaders of the effort agreed to choose projects that would not only advance the long-term vision for modern, leading-edge train transportation, but also have independent utility for improving current service in the near-term. Realizing that potential ARRA grant funding would only cover a small portion of the estimated \$40 billion in total costs to bring high speed rail fully online between San Francisco and Los Angeles, MTC and others focused their investment strategy on the upgrades to Bay Area's current rail infrastructure that would be absolutely critical and necessary for the eventual operation of the new train service. The project list includes electrification of the existing rail line so Caltrain can upgrade its commuter services from diesel power to cleaner, quieter electric technology that would pave the way for high-speed rail. The ARRA proposal also seeks funding to equip Caltrain rail cars with automated train-control equipment that senses impending danger on the tracks and grade separations between the rail line and street at a key corridor location that would benefit both the safety of existing train service and high speed rail.

Two other signature projects are the replacement of San Francisco's existing terminal with a new, modern facility named the Transbay Transit Center and the expansion of the Diridon Station in San Jose. Both of these projects would create integrated, intermodal transit hubs connecting different rail and bus systems in busy downtowns and ultimately serve as iconic symbols of high-speed rail in California.

Spanning three counties, the ARRA plans for the San Francisco/Silicon Valley corridor aim to convey benefits along the entire rail system, not just individual locations. Benefits such as the creation of an estimated 100,000 jobs, enhanced regional economic competitiveness, improved environmental quality, better rail safety, and increased opportunities for transit-oriented development are expected to accrue all along the greater Bay Area corridor from the planned system upgrades and new infrastructure.

The Implementing ARRA Series

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

For More Information

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