



EDITORIAL

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High-speed rail will carry state into future

Any Californian who drives or rides in a car knows that this state is bound for a severe transportation heart attack because of the clogged arteries we all experience every day.

Although we are a half-century behind Japan, France and other countries, which have been alleviating highway congestion with high-speed trains, we must have high-tech railway transportation as we are propelled through the next few decades of the 21st century.

Proposition 1 on the Nov. 4 ballot can get this enormously important project on track for the future.

The measure summary calls for an obvious answer to this simple question: "For the purpose of reducing traffic on the state's highways and roadways, upgrading commuter transportation, improving people's ability to get safely from city to city, alleviating congestion at airports, reducing air pollution, and providing for California's growing population, shall the state build a high-speed train system and improve existing passenger rail lines serving the major population centers by creating a rail trust fund that will issue bonds totaling \$9.95 billion?"

The Antelope Valley Press answers that far-ranging question with an unqualified yes.

The proposal calls for the project to be paid from existing state funds at an average cost of \$647 million per year over the 30-year life of the bonds, with all expenditures subject to an independent audit.

The electric trains are expected to run at 200 miles per hour or faster and connect the major metropolitan areas of San Francisco, Sacramento through the Central Valley and Antelope Valley into Los Angeles, Orange County, the Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside counties), and San Diego.

This effort has been under way for a dozen years. In 1996, the California High-Speed Rail Authority was formed to provide service between Northern California and the Southland. The authority has already spent about \$60 million for pre-construction activities, such as environmental studies and planning.

The authority in 2006 estimated the total cost would be \$45 billion. It's expected that funding will come from multiple federal, private, local and state sources.

For Antelope Valley, the high-speed train could whisk commuters and other passengers to downtown Los Angeles in less than 45 minutes, including several stops.

Furthermore, the accelerated transportation would provide swift access to and from Palmdale Regional Airport, which is losing its latest airline service in part because of slow ground transportation connecting the high desert and the teeming Los Angeles basin.

By urging a yes vote on Proposition 1, the Valley Press is stating unequivocally that California can't afford not to have a high-speed rail system operating in the next few decades.