



Californians Regret Approving High-Speed Rail

By: **Bonner Cohen**

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Four years after approving a \$9 billion high-speed rail proposal, Californians strongly oppose high-speed rail and would vote against it if given another chance, a University of Southern California/*Los Angeles Times* poll reports.

Only 33 Percent Support

In the 2008 elections, Californians approved borrowing \$9 billion for high-speed rail by a vote of 53 percent to 47 percent. Four years later, however, costs are soaring far beyond initial projections, promised transit times are becoming longer and longer, and ridership estimates are proving overly optimistic.

Opponents of high-speed rail now outnumber supporters by nearly two to one. According to the USC/*Los Angeles Times* June 2 poll, 59 percent of Californians now oppose high-speed rail, and only 33 percent support it.

“California voters have clearly reconsidered their support for high-speed rail,” Dan Schnur, director of the USC/*Los Angeles Times* Poll and director of the USC Unruh Institute of Politics, said in a USC press release. “They want the chance to vote again—and they want to vote no.”

“The growing budget deficit is making Californians hesitant about spending so much money on a project like this one when they’re seeing cuts to public education and law enforcement. But they also seem to be wary as to whether state government can run a big speed rail system effectively,” Schnur added.

Voters Get Another ChanceThe poll bodes well for proponents of a November 2012 ballot initiative to halt the sale of state bonds to finance high-speed rail.

“In 2008, California voters approved Proposition 1A authorizing the state to issue bonds to help pay for a \$45 billion statewide high-speed rail system. But what they have now is nothing like what they were told they would get,” former U.S. Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA) explains on RevoteRail.com, a Web site rallying support for the November 2012 ballot initiative.

Chance to Recoup Expenses

An analysis conducted by California Secretary of State Debra Bowen found halting the high-speed rail project would save the state up to \$709 million each year.

“They used to laugh at Alaska for its Bridge to Nowhere, but few are laughing in California, since the project in Alaska looks like an economic windfall by comparison,” said H. Sterling Burnett, a senior fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis.

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