Next time somebody tells you that passenger trains don’t “pay for themselves”, hit ’em with a few of these:

- Shrewd Investment in rail-based transit has been shown to return 4 to 6 dollars in benefits to the community for every 1 dollar spent. Taxation is not always a bad thing – as with any investment, it all depends on what you get back.
- Fuel Economy. A long distance train achieves 5 to 7 times the passenger miles per unit of fuel or energy as does a mid-size car with two occupants. Similar economies in steel, plastic, cement and other materials apply. NOTE: The fuel economy picture, for rail, gets even prettier when you realize that, unlike rail-beds and train wheels, roads and rubber tires are themselves made out of petroleum products.
- Wise Land Use. One “lane” of railroad track is good for as much passenger-carrying capacity as three to four lanes of highway, not to mention that it requires a lot less maintenance and repair.
- Clean Energy. Passenger trains, local or long distance, can easily be made to operate on renewably-generated energy or home-grown fuel. A prime example of this is the C-Train system of Calgary, Alberta, which buys all its power from a nearby wind farm.
- Staying Alive. Compared to the auto/highway mode of transportation, rail kills and injures far fewer people, even when counted by passenger mile. This, of course, results in huge savings in both money and heartache. You’re 30.55 times more likely to be killed or injured in a car or small truck than in a train, per vehicle mile travelled (VMT). Further, a rail “vehicle” consists of an entire train, not one car. Source:Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2004.
- Productivity. Workers in our metro areas who commute by rail tend to save a lot of time and energy, arriving at work more ready to work than to recuperate. They’re also more likely to arrive on time.
- Take Home Pay. Good transit (which usually means rail-based transit) saves users a lot of money, which they can save or spend on something besides getting to work, school or entertainment.
- Security. After a natural or man-made disaster, rail lines can be restored to service much faster than highways or even runways.
- Wide Open Spaces. Rail service promotes infill and redevelopment along existing urban and suburban transportation corridors. This increases the

tax base in those areas and saves a fortune on utility lines and other infrastructure (a given length of utility line can serve many more people). Besides all this, the less land we suck up housing people and moving them around, the more we have left for all the things we like about open space.

- Fairness. Our auto and air networks are already heavily and wastefully subsidized. What's the difference with rail, except for a much greater return for our tax and commuting dollars?

"But what about national security?" you say.

Guess what!

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