

BULLETIN: December 2001

We at RAILS, Inc. want to talk about Bullet Trains.

We keep hearing references to Bullet (super fast) trains as an expensive and unacceptable alternative to highway and road expansion.

This is a red herring issue. Don't let it throw you "off track" about transportation choices for New Mexico.

A Bullet Train, along with its right-of-way, is pretty hideously expensive –probably not much cheaper than a freeway expansion or a new road (note heavy sarcasm). But these are not the only transportation options we're looking at in New Mexico. There are other passenger Rail systems, relatively cheap and easy to put together:

(1) A comfortable "starter" Commuter Rail line running several times daily between Belen and Bernalillo. COST: \$34 million/year.

(2) The same system expanded to Socorro-Santa Fe. Cost: \$9-10 million/year, plus \$10-12 million *one* time for new tracks, signals, etc. between Santa Fe and the main line.

(3) Light Rail (Or Modern Streetcar) lines along existing boulevards. Cost: \$20-25 million per mile.

Several things to remember: the above cost figures include the trains themselves (leased, with appropriate insurance), and assume no fare revenue—a pessimistic assumption since people do ride these systems if they are run with any degree of competence. Also, these systems interface very well with other modes of transportation and comply with ISTEA, TEA-2 1 and other federal laws.

Don't get sucked into false choices like the phony freeway vs Bullet Train thing.

Want to know more?

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