

## **More Than A Third Of Americans Aware Of High Speed Rail Projects In Their State**

*Nearly two-thirds support state or federal funding for High Speed Rail, including those that live in Florida; one in five oppose, 15% unsure*

**NEW YORK, N.Y. – February 24, 2011** – President Obama announced in April 2009, and reconfirmed during his recent State of the Union address, his commitment to develop high-speed intercity passenger rail across the United States.

High-speed rail is a type of passenger rail transport between major cities that operates at substantially faster speeds than current intercity passenger trains in the U.S. It is designed to provide fast, reliable, and convenient service, operates using electric power and often includes onboard amenities such as food and beverage service and Wi-fi access.

**The Harris Poll** conducted an online survey among 2,566 adults between January 17 and 24, 2011 to gauge awareness, intention to use and position on funding for high-speed rail. At the time of the survey, there were ten proposed high-speed rail corridors across the United States<sup>a</sup>. To-date, projects in California and Florida have been the most visible.

When Americans were asked about awareness of high-speed rail projects, only a little more than a third (35%) of those living in one of the proposed high-speed rail corridors said they are aware of a high-speed rail project that is either proposed or under development in their state, with more than four in ten (45%) unsure. “The relatively low awareness of high-speed rail across the country is not surprising given the disparate, regional nature of today’s hottest HSR debates” said Linda Schulz, Vice President of Public Affairs and Policy at Harris Interactive. “However, as discussions become more prominent in more areas, and as projects get underway, we will be well positioned to monitor changing awareness and attitudes”. Not surprisingly, awareness is highest in states where HSR is developing the fastest (68% are aware in California corridor, 60% in Florida). Awareness in other states with proposed high-speed rail projects include the Chicago Hub at 31% and New York at 28%.

After explaining HSR, two thirds of Americans (66%) indicate they are somewhat or very likely to consider using the service when traveling for pleasure, but that number drops in half (33%) when asked about travel for business. Men, however, are more likely to consider HSR travel than women for both business and pleasure. Additionally, those with more education and greater income are also more likely to consider traveling by high-speed rail.

### **Factors in Choosing High-speed Rail**

There are many factors that may impact the use of high-speed rail, but cost (81%), location of train stations (68%), overall trip time (65%) and safety (61%) are the primary factors that people would consider before choosing to utilize high-speed rail. Both cost and safety are especially important to women compared to men.

### **Funding High-speed Rail**

A very public issue surrounding high-speed rail today is funding. Several states have declined the use of federal funds including Ohio, Wisconsin and most recently Florida (this survey was conducted before Florida declined funding). However, almost two thirds of Americans (64%) say they somewhat or strongly support using state funding for HSR and a similar number (62%) support using federal funds. The areas with the greatest support for

high-speed rail funding include the California corridor where 70% support state funding being used and 73% support federal funding. 70% of both the Pacific North West and Gulf corridor residents also support state funding with more than 60% each also supporting federal funding. Additionally, more than two thirds of Florida residents support state and federal funding of high-speed rail, “a particularly poignant point”, notes Schulz, as Florida recently declined federal HSR funding the state had actively sought. While those in states without a high-speed rail project still support state funding (61%), they are more likely to oppose federal funding for these projects (32%).

**So What?**

With the relatively steep prices and the time consuming security processes associated with current airline travel, and increases in the cost of gasoline affecting highway travel, American consumers may be looking for a travel alternative. While many of them are not aware of high-speed rail plans, on balance they support using government funds to develop high-speed rail projects, yet time will tell how many of these projects successfully get underway, and how many Americans then take advantage of them. Of course, it should also be noted, this has become a highly politicized issue with Republicans, Democrats and Independents expressing varying levels of support for the development and allocation of funds to HSR.

**TABLE 1  
AWARENESS OF HSR**

"High-speed rail is a type of passenger rail transport between major cities that operates at substantially faster speeds than current intercity passenger trains in the U.S. High-speed rail is designed to provide fast, reliable, and convenient service between select major cities. It operates using electric power and often includes onboard amenities such as food and beverage service and Wi-fi access. Do you know if high-speed passenger rail service is being proposed or under development in your state?"

Base: All adults

	Total	States with HSR projects	HSR Corridors (states included in each listed below) <sup>a</sup>									
			South-east	CA	Pacific NW	South Central	Gulf Coast	Chicago Hub	FL	Key-stone (PA)	Empire (NY)	North. NE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Yes, one is proposed or under development (NET)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>
Yes, one is proposed	25	26	17	48	11	12	16	25	50	20	17	22
Yes, one is under development	8	9	4	20	14	*	9	6	10	4	11	3
No, one is not proposed nor under development	22	20	22	5	28	34	28	26	3	15	18	21
Not at all sure	44	45	57	27	47	54	46	43	37	61	53	54

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding; \* indicates less than .05%

<sup>a</sup> 10 High Speed Rail Corridors – South East Corridor (Washington DC, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina), California Corridor (California & Nevada), Pacific North West Corridor (Washington & Oregon), South central Corridor (Oklahoma and Arkansas), Gulf Coast Corridor (Texas Louisiana & Alabama), Chicago Hub (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Minnesota), Florida Corridor (Florida), Keystone Corridor (Pennsylvania) Empire Corridor (New York) and Northern New England Corridor (Massachusetts, Main, Connecticut).

Other States Impacted by High Speed Rail – Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Tennessee.

NON-High Speed Rail States – Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

**TABLE 2A  
FUNDING FOR HSR – STATE FUNDING**

"Development of the intercity passenger rail system is paid for by both Federal and state governments, similar to how most other infrastructure projects are funded. Operating costs are the responsibility of each state and/or the private sector. Currently the Federal Government is offering funds to the states for high-speed rail projects. Knowing this, how do you feel about state and federal funds being used for High-speed Rail?"

*State funding*

Base: All adults

	Total	States with HSR projects	States with no HSR projects	HSR Corridors									
				South-east	CA	Pacific NW	South Central	Gulf Coast	Chicago	FL	Key-stone	Empire	North. NE
				%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Support (NET)</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>
Strongly support	31	29	26	34	35	24	16	35	24	32	28	34	19
Somewhat support	33	33	35	30	35	46	49	35	32	35	28	23	38
<b>Oppose (NET)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>29</b>
Somewhat oppose	11	11	18	12	8	11	7	8	11	11	16	13	23
Strongly oppose	11	11	7	8	13	6	7	10	14	10	8	14	6
Not at all sure	15	16	14	16	9	13	21	13	20	12	21	17	15

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
		%	%	%
<b>Support (NET)</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>66</b>
Strongly support	31	18	43	28
Somewhat support	33	34	31	39
<b>Oppose (NET)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>
Somewhat oppose	11	17	7	10
Strongly oppose	11	18	5	11
Not at all sure	15	13	13	13

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2B  
FUNDING FOR HSR – FEDERAL FUNDING**

"Development of the intercity passenger rail system is paid for by both Federal and state governments, similar to how most other infrastructure projects are funded. Operating costs are the responsibility of each state and/or the private sector. Currently the Federal Government is offering funds to the states for high-speed rail projects. Knowing this, how do you feel about state and federal funds being used for High-speed Rail?"

*Federal funding*

Base: All adults

	Total	States with HSR projects	States with no HSR projects	HSR Corridors									
				South-east	CA	Pacific NW	South Central	Gulf Coast	Chicago	FL	Key-stone	Empire	North. NE
				%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Support (NET)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>56</b>
Strongly support	31	29	17	32	41	21	19	32	25	32	24	32	21
Somewhat support	32	32	36	28	32	42	44	34	32	34	24	27	35
<b>Oppose (NET)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>
Somewhat oppose	11	11	19	12	7	19	12	9	10	10	16	12	23
Strongly oppose	12	12	13	13	12	5	6	12	14	12	15	12	7
Not at all sure	15	15	14	16	9	13	18	13	19	12	22	17	14

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
		%	%	%
<b>Support (NET)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>63</b>
Strongly support	31	17	43	29
Somewhat support	32	32	32	34
<b>Oppose (NET)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>
Somewhat oppose	11	16	8	12
Strongly oppose	12	21	4	12
Not at all sure	15	13	13	13

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3A**  
**LIKELY TO USE HSR – FOR BUSINESS**

"Based on your understanding of high-speed rail service, if it were available, how likely are you to use this service for the following types of travel?"

*Travel for business*

Base: All adults

	Total	Gender		Education				Income				
		Male	Female	H.S. or less	Some college	College grad	Post grad	\$34.9K or less	\$35K-\$49.9K	\$50K-\$74.9K	\$75K-\$99.9K	\$100K+
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Likely (NET)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>
Very likely	18	22	14	13	17	21	35	13	9	26	17	25
Somewhat likely	15	18	13	10	18	22	17	15	14	15	13	18
<b>Unlikely (NET)</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>51</b>
Not that likely	11	12	11	9	12	15	13	7	14	8	13	16
Not at all likely	46	39	53	57	43	35	28	54	54	38	47	35
Not at all sure	10	10	10	11	10	7	7	11	9	12	10	6

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3B**  
**LIKELY TO USE HSR – FOR PLEASURE**

"Based on your understanding of high-speed rail service, if it were available, how likely are you to use this service for the following types of travel?"

*Travel for pleasure*

Base: All adults

	Total	Gender		Education				Income				
		Male	Female	H.S. or less	Some college	College grad	Post grad	\$34.9K or less	\$35K-\$49.9K	\$50K-\$74.9K	\$75K-\$99.9K	\$100K+
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Likely (NET)</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>74</b>
Very likely	37	40	34	28	41	40	53	28	35	43	39	46
Somewhat likely	30	29	30	27	31	35	28	32	29	28	26	28
<b>Unlikely (NET)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>
Not that likely	10	9	10	11	9	10	7	8	10	8	14	10
Not at all likely	17	15	18	25	13	10	7	22	19	14	13	12
Not at all sure	7	6	8	10	6	5	5	10	7	7	7	4

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 4  
FACTORS IN USING HSR**

"If you were making travel decisions and high-speed rail was an option, what factors would you consider when deciding whether or not to purchase?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
	%	%	%
Cost/affordability	81	79	84
Convenience of train station locations	68	66	70
Overall trip time	65	65	65
Safety	61	56	65
Reliability	58	58	59
Comfort, including seat and mobility options	57	56	59
Efficiency of security check/process	37	34	39
Amenities offered (cell phone use, WiFi, etc)	33	33	32
Environmental impact	23	21	25
Other	2	2	2
Not sure	9	8	10

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**Methodology**

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between January 17 to 24, 2011 among 2,566 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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Q930, 935, 937, 940, 945, 950, 955

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### **About Harris Interactive**

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