

# Study: Planning key for cities along high-speed rail

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A new study suggests high-speed rail in California will likely create jobs and population growth in larger cities with stations along the route, and "second-tier" cities like Fresno would fare better than those without stations.

The report, issued this week by the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University, said that while California cities vary widely in planning for high-speed train stations, it will take a savvy combination of station location, links to other transportation systems, and supportive land-use and zoning policies to make stations a springboard for job growth and development.

"Despite widespread projections of [rail]-induced development in station cities, the experience in other countries indicates that a 'build-it-and-they-will-come' approach is insufficient," wrote Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, a professor of urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, and her co-authors, professors at UCLA and San Jose State.

"In theory, the economic and urban development impacts of [high-speed rail] can be significant," the report said. But those effects are much less likely without proper planning.

Fresno's strong agribusiness economy is a factor that favors success, the researchers said, much as Anaheim can leverage Disneyland.

Cities can also work to "capture the jobs related to providing or maintaining the HSR itself," researchers wrote.

Fresno already is campaigning to be the site of a maintenance station, competing with sites in Merced, Madera and Kern counties. Local officials view the maintenance station as a potential "golden goose," with 1,500 or more permanent jobs, and as a catalyst for industrial development at the south end of the city.

A downtown Fresno passenger station on the high-speed line, on the west side of the Union Pacific freight line at Mariposa Street, is expected to be vital in revitalizing downtown and the nearby Chinatown district.

If there are benefits to be had, they won't be instantaneous, researchers said.