

By Jeff Denham, Kevin McCarthy and Devin Nunes Friday, February 10 [Link](#)

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood was in the Central Valley recently to talk high-speed rail. He extolled the positive impacts this rail line would have in our state and in the Valley in particular. Unfortunately, his perspective is contrary to the cold hard facts about California's HSR project.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority's plan has been roundly criticized by financial and transportation experts alike. The state auditor called the funding plan "increasingly risky."

The Peer Group specifically empowered to review the project called the business model incomplete and recommended the Legislature not approve funding for construction. The Legislative Analyst's Office has even questioned whether the plan complies with the stipulations set out in Proposition 1A.

Furthermore, the project is becoming increasingly unpopular with California voters. In a recent Field Poll, 59% of Californians said that if given the chance to vote again on HSR, they would vote "no."

Supporters of HSR talk about this project being something to leave behind for our kids and grandkids. But if it is allowed to move forward, the only thing it will leave them is a mountain of debt.

The most recent cost estimate weighs in at \$98 billion. That's three times higher than the original estimate and eight times more than the CHSRA has to spend. The CHSRA has just over \$12 billion in funding secured (most of which comes from the \$10 billion HSR bond California taxpayers will have to pay back).

The prospects of the state finding tens of billions of additional dollars from general revenue for HSR is unrealistic given Sacramento's continuing financial challenges.

In its planning documents, CHSRA counts the private sector as contributing \$11 billion to the cause, but investors are nowhere to be seen. Their plan also assumes \$55 billion from the federal government, but Washington is looking at its fourth year of \$1 trillion deficits, and as Valley representatives, we are fighting to get our budget into balance by cutting waste and spending smarter, something HSR does neither of.

There is only one way this project can be paid for: more borrowing. And that means higher taxes and/or bigger cuts for California.

It's not just money the project is missing, it's credible ridership estimates as well. The CHSRA suggests that the rail line will serve between 29 and 43 million riders per year. If we take a look at the busiest passenger rail line in the country, the Northeast corridor, we see how ridiculous those numbers seem.

Last year, the Northeast's regional and Acela services carried 10.3 million passengers. That's 19 million fewer passengers than California's "low" estimation. Furthermore, the average roundtrip fare from San Francisco to Los Angeles is estimated at \$162. Yet it costs almost twice that to travel from Washington to New York using the Northeast's HSR service. The promises of HSR are based in hope and fanciful estimations, not facts.

HSR is not worth bankrupting California and adding new and painful burdens on taxpayers. Turning a blind eye to the growing amount of evidence stating that this project is not ready for primetime is not just irresponsible, it's negligent.

We refuse to stand by and allow those who choose to ignore the facts push this project to construction, and we will continue to fight to put a stop to it. We are working to move legislation to freeze unspent federal dollars for this project in the upcoming transportation bill.

At a time when we're struggling to find ways to pay for existing programs, we should not be moving forward on a new massive expenditure for a fatally flawed project that doesn't even have a secured funding source, not to mention the additional annual costs in operating subsidies.

California taxpayers can't afford it, and Washington has its own spending problems we are trying to fix. We stand with the majority of Californians who see this project as a billion dollar boondoggle and will keep fighting to ensure your hard-earned dollars aren't thrown at a train to nowhere.