

RWU Resolution on Rail Improvement/Development in North America

Whereas, the US, Canada, and Mexico have a vast existing rail network, with the U.S. rail network alone at more than 140,000 miles, the world's largest; and

Whereas, this vast network can be vastly improved in the coming years - through electrification, multiple tracking, higher speed limits, grade crossing eliminations, and increased train frequencies - to serve a far greater number of shippers and passengers than at present; and

Whereas, these improvements can be made cheaper, be implemented far quicker, and serve a far greater constituency than would the construction of an entirely new network; and

Whereas, making use of existing right-of-way can avoid many of the controversies (e.g. land condemnations, environmental concerns, high price tags, etc.), construction delays, and cost overruns that can be associated with "high speed rail" (HSR) projects; and

Whereas, the North American public conversation across society more than ever supports transportation infrastructure repair and improvement projects, especially rail, that include everyone who lives here; and

Whereas, the decisions we make regarding these projects now will highly affect our future health, safety, and economic prosperity for generations to come; and

Whereas, railroaders know from experience around the world that true HSR can and must be a critical part of 21st century sustainable environmentally sound transportation future; and

Whereas, High Speed Rail projects that only serve elites or which dismiss problems of climate, access, safety, and justice will leave the public hostile towards rail solutions; and

Whereas the majority of the currently proposed HSR projects are exclusively passenger service projects that principally serve communities who already have access; and

Whereas available funding for these "HSR" projects has the potential to absorb significant financial resources that could otherwise be made available to upgrade, expand, and develop our existing rail network that serves both passenger and freight; and

Whereas rail lines that currently exist in unconnected communities are now often at risk for abandonment, and once they are gone, recovering them for public benefit will be difficult if not impossible to accomplish; and

Whereas railroad workers want to have a safe and secure future, and therefore must not leave the key policy decisions about that future up to those who regard them as disposable in an industry dominated by finance and Wall Street; and

Whereas many so-called HSR passenger-only projects are designed to substitute glitzy technology for trained and skilled railroad workers, putting communities at risk;

Therefore, be it Resolved that Railroad Workers United calls for rail development projects that upgrade low as well as high end speed for both passenger and freight trains, remove barriers like road crossings at grade and build capacity and environmentally sustainable safe rail transport for the future of all stakeholders (workers, passengers, shippers, trackside communities, etc); and

Be it Further Resolved, that Railroad Workers United does not support "high speed rail" projects that exclude freight service trains and do not reconnect excluded communities; and

Be it Further Resolved, that RWU opposes diverting crucial funding necessary to upgrade existing rail infrastructure to "high speed" experiments that only serve elites; and

Be it Finally Resolved that RWU calls upon railroaders, trade unions, rail advocates and allies to join with RWU in advocating for a broad array of integrated rail solutions that will make railroads a key part of the Green transportation future that serves our whole society.