

Advocacy Project Explanation and Justification

The average American family's second largest monthly budget category is transportation, on average spending 33% more on transportation than food. This is only exasperated by the recently outrageous gas and car prices. A solution that can solve this is a national high speed rail system. A national high speed rail system comes with more benefits than just lowering the cost of transportation. It helps to combat climate change by reducing emissions from both trains and planes, providing faster (in addition to cheaper) travel, creating jobs, generating profit, updating the United States' expiring infrastructure, reducing traffic, and decreasing American dependence on foreign oil. Furthermore, high speed rail systems are not untested, as they are very common in Europe and Asia, where countries see these benefits. High speed rail also has a lot of room for future improvements, with companies working on new technology like maglev (magnetic levitation trains).

My objective for this project was to inform people of how a nation wide high speed railway would benefit them. I focused specifically on Penn State students because that is the audience I have access to, and many Penn State students are from Pittsburgh or Philadelphia, two stops that would definitely be included in a high speed railway. However, although I'm focusing on Penn State students, my audience as a whole is still American citizens who want to save money on transportation. My goal is to convey all the ways an electric, national high speed railway would benefit the United States and individual American citizens.

To do this, I began by doing background research on high speed railways, specifically what they are and how they work. I ended up not including the information on how they work, as it wasn't relevant to my message and would likely lose the interest of those in my audience who just want to know how a high speed railway would benefit them. I then moved on to researching those in China and Europe. I researched the benefits China and Europe saw when they first installed their high speed railways. I then researched what a high speed railway would look like in the United States, including tentative maps, technology, and overarching management organization. I also looked into the benefits experts predict the United States would see from installing a high speed railway. I also researched problems the United States is facing right now, like climate change and the high cost of transportation, and looked at how high speed railway's benefits can help.

To convey my message, I decided I needed something interactive. I wanted to create something that people could use to see how a high speed railway would directly benefit them as an individual. I also thought people are more likely to remember something they did rather than just something they saw or read. I tossed around a few different ideas, including creating a

physical demonstration and doing it at the hub, but landed on an interactive website. I did this because although I am specifically focusing on Penn State students, my audience as a whole is still American adults who want to save money on transportation. I thought a website would have a farther reach and a longer impact as opposed to a one time demonstration.

My website has four main pages. There is a home page, which has lots of pictures of high speed railway and a summary and link to each of the other three pages so people can immediately find what they are looking for. There is a “how to help” page, which provides a form letter to your representative and a link to find who your representative is, links to petitions, links to organizations you can donate to, and more. There is an “information” page which just provides more information on the benefits of high speed railways for those interested. Lastly, and most importantly, is the “interactive map” page. The interactive map page shows a picture of the most popular map of a proposed high speed railway route. Each city on the map is a button. Users can look at the map and pick a city to start in and end in. They then click the button for their starting city, and subsequently click the button for every city along their desired route until they reach their ending city. This allows users to customize their routes. Once they click the calculate button, the website will output a time and cost comparison for driving, flying, and taking a high speed railway from start to end. This allows users to directly see how a high speed railway would save them time and/or money. Unfortunately, because of the way I had to code it, the interactive map page is a bit glitchy on mobile. The link to my website is below.

The website is great, but I needed to make people aware of it. So, I created a poster with a QR code link to my website. I printed out some copies of the poster and hung them up on bulletin boards of the buildings I have been in recently. I decided to make the poster humorous and a bit mysterious because I thought that would be more intriguing and engaging for my main audience of college students, making them more likely to scan the QR code and engage with the website. In order to track the success of my website, I have a contact form where people can submit comments on my website at the bottom. I am also tracking traffic on my website so I can see how many people are visiting and if the poster was successful in gaining viewers. Hopefully, the website will allow people to see how a high speed railway would benefit them and persuade them to visit the “how to help” page and take one of the actions listed there.

[Poster](#)

[Website](#)