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Will an $8 billion investment remake passenger rail, or will complacency return?

After President Obama laid out what intercity passenger rail projects would earn a piece of his $8 billion in high speed rail funds, talk turned as much as what the funds didn’t accomplish as what they do. Famed Amtrak critic Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., criticized the bill for not creating genuine high speed corridors in the model of France’s TGV, Germany’s ICE, or Spain’s AVE. But the routes funded represent steps forward for passenger rail, improving upon existing services and creating some all-new corridors.

Obama chose Tampa, Fla., site of the most radical upgrade in rail service that the $8 billion will fund, to make his announcement. The Tampa-Orlando, Fla., corridor will go from one Amtrak passenger train a day to a dedicated corridor for 168-mph trains. The 84-mile link is ambitious, and will go from one Amtrak passenger train a day to a dedicated corridor for 168-mph trains. The Tampa-Orlando, Fla., corridor will go from one Amtrak passenger train a day to a dedicated corridor for 168-mph trains. The 84-mile link is ambitious, and

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waukegan route around. “We believe it’s a very positive step we’re going to take with the state [of Wisconsin],” LoVecchio says.

CSSP spokesman Gary Sease says his rail investments won’t be visible in January, but did sound a note of caution. “If you place freight capacity, that puts the freight back on the highways and further adds to traffic congestion,” he says. “We share the country’s enthusiasm about the ability of high speed rail to be a mobility solution and an economic stimulus. But we are very much watching this with an eye toward pro-
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