

Obama pushes for high-speed rail

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President Barack Obama announced plans for a high-speed rail system Thursday, saying \$8 billion in stimulus funds has been set aside for the effort.

High-speed rail connecting cities and opening up economic opportunities "has been happening for decades. ... It's being done. It's just not being done here," Obama said when outlining his plan. Countries such as France, Spain, China and Japan have demonstrated the success of high-speed transit systems.

In addition to the \$8 billion from the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the president said he would be requesting another \$5 billion to be allocated over the next five years.

"This plan is realistic," Obama said.

Outfitting the country with high-speed rail lines would unfold in two stages. The first would upgrade existing rail lines and the second would test light rail lines elsewhere.

He said at least 10 major corridors have been identified as possible projects, "but no decision has been made."

High-speed transit will have immediate and lasting effects on the U.S. infrastructure, by creating jobs, untangling gridlock, saving lives and reducing the country's dependency on foreign oil.

"There's no reason why we cannot do this," he said.

At the podium with Obama during his announcement were Vice President Joe Biden and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

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