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## High Speed Trains Will Fix The Economy

Richard Florida writing for the Atlantic thinks high speed rail development is key to economic recovery. He says economic recovery will come through "a new period of geographic expansion - or what geographers term a 'new spatial fix.'"

(Here's a look at the world's coolest high-speed trains)

To create this new expansion requires investment in infrastructure like trains.

The history of capitalist development is the history of the more expansive and intensive use of space. Post-war suburbs, the rise of larger metropolitan areas, the development of multi-nodal regions with edge cities as well as downtown cores are part and parcel of this process of geographic development. It's a mistake to consider suburban sprawl a backward step (as some do), and to see only more compact urban style back-to-the-city development as a path to the future. The rise of the mega-region is the cornerstone of a new, more intensive and also more expansive use of space.

New periods of geographic expansion require new systems of infrastructure. Ever since the days of the canals, the early railroad, and streetcar suburbs, we've seen how infrastructure and transportation systems work to spur new patterns economic and regional development. The streetcar expanded the boundaries of the late 19th and early 20th century city, while the railroad moved goods and people between them. The automobile enabled workers to move to the suburbs and undertake far greater commutes, expanding the geographic landscape still further.

Why high speed and not just regular trains? When Philadelphia suddenly becomes a suburb of New York, the ease with which we can travel around makes economic prosperity more easily distributed.

Mega-regions, if they are to function as integrated economic units, require better, more effective, and faster ways move goods, people, and ideas. High-speed rail accomplishes that, and it also provides a framework for future in-fill development along its corridors. Just as development filled-in along the early street-car lines and the post-war highways, high-speed rail will encourage denser, more compact, and concentrated development with growth filling in along its routes over time. Spain's new high-speed rail link between Barcelona and Madrid not only massively reduced commuting times between these two great Spanish cities, according to a recent New York Times report, it has also helped revitalize several declining locations along the line.