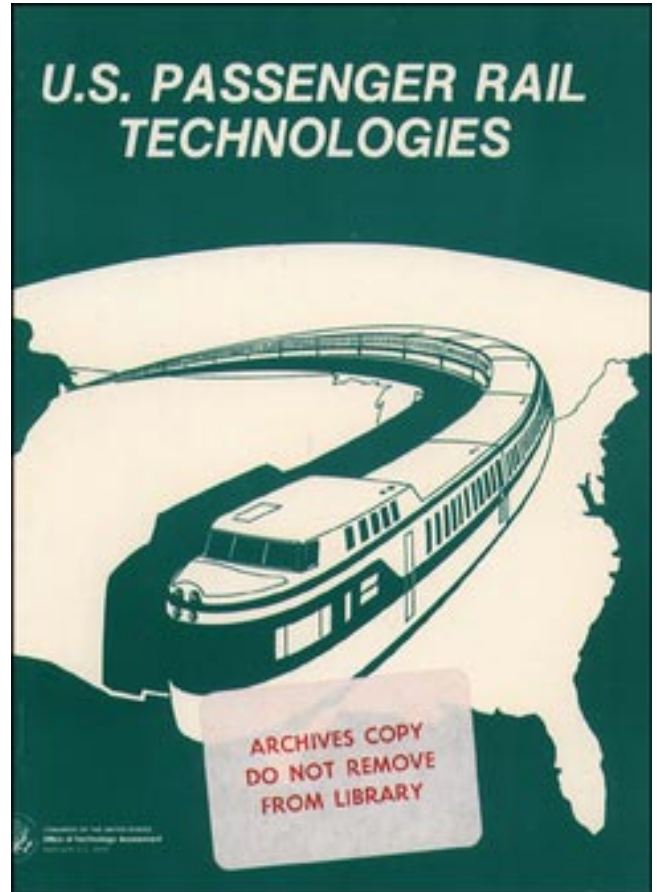


U.S. Passenger Rail Technologies

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Foreword

Passenger rail transportation has been the subject of much concern and congressional action for the past two decades in the United States. As the country's transportation system evolved to include increased use of air and automobile technologies for inter-city travel, passenger rail service experienced significant ridership declines, resulting in institutional changes from private to public sector operation.

For the decade of the *IWO'S*, Federal attention focused primarily on determining and stabilizing a core passenger rail system for the country. While history reflects that the United States, since the early 1960's, has been interested in high-speed rail and advanced ground transport technologies, including magnetic levitation, the more pressing societal issues of a failing rail infrastructure and institutional reform have taken precedence in the policymaking arena for the past decade. Thus, expertise in high-speed rail now rests primarily abroad.

At this juncture, however, discussion related to growth and change in passenger rail technology, particularly high-speed rail and magnetic levitation, is increasing. Nine corridors are being actively explored by State and local governments, regional agencies, and U.S. and foreign technology developers and suppliers for possible application of high-speed ground transport systems.

This OTA assessment seeks to lay out in general form what is known about these high-speed technologies and the foreign experience with them. It also seeks to identify the areas of uncertainty relative to their application in the United States. The study is intended to identify significant policy questions and issues that will be pertinent to Federal, State, and local debate on this subject.



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