



Solutionary Rail, a people-powered campaign to electrify America's railroads and open corridors to a clean energy future

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Key Components of Solutionary Rail **[for Letters to Editors and to Legislators]**

1. **Solutionary Rail is a plan to electrify the railroad for both freight and passengers.** Currently, the trains carry heavy commodities like coal, oil, and grain over long distances, while other high-value freight is carried by energy-intensive trucks that cause wear and tear to our taxpayer-funded highways. Solutionary Rail would shift this economic model to a much greater reliance on rail, taking advantage of the fuel efficiency of steel wheels on rail – and powering the engines with wind and solar energy via high-voltage power lines.

Sample talking point: “We are facing global warming of 1.5 and 2 degrees C. Transforming our current transportation infrastructure to zero-carbon emissions in the next 10 years is crucial to preventing warming beyond this point. Battery-powered trucks and cars will play a part for short distances, but battery manufacture and disposal will be resource-intensive as we scale up. An electrified railroad is crucial for moving freight and passengers over both short and long distances in a zero-carbon emissions transportation infrastructure.”

2. **Rail corridors as energy superhighways:** Solutionary Rail proposes turning the nation’s railroad corridors into “energy superhighways” for wind and solar power, transporting these renewables from the areas where they are generated to towns and cities via high-voltage power lines running above the lines powering the trains. Public utilities, rural electrical coops and tribal communities and nations will have new opportunities to sell their energy throughout the grid.

Sample talking point: “In addition to electrifying the railroad with renewable energy, the rail corridors would become “energy superhighways” for transmitting renewable energy from wind and solar rich areas of the country to towns and cities.”

3. **Higher speed vs. Ultra High Speed Bullet Trains:** There is a difference between ultra high speed bullet trains (250 mph and above) for passengers only and Solutionary Rail’s proposal for higher-speed trains for both freight and passengers (80-125 or even 150 mph). The Solutionary Rail plan requires modernization of existing track – *which can be accomplished in five years* -- avoiding the time and cost of acquiring land and building whole new tracks for bullet trains. Increased efficiency and speeds of up to 80 mph for freight and 125-150 mph for passengers mean better service to communities, farmers, and manufacturers, drawing freight and people off highways and airplanes and back onto the tracks.

Sample talking point: “Solutionary Rail is more affordable and doable in a short period of time than bullet trains – and would benefit not only urban professionals but rural communities, farmers, and manufacturers. Bullet trains are ultra-high-speed trains traveling 250 mph or more, and they will help attract people from planes to trains as we modernize our energy-efficient railroad, but they require finding whole new corridors and building whole new tracks. Solutionary Rail therefore recommends starting with upgrading existing track for higher speed trains (80-125 or 150mph).”

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4. **Financing Solutionary Rail:** Electrifying and improving the railroads is a project on the scale of constructing the Interstate Highway System decades ago. Thus, the Solutionary Rail plan includes creating a tax-exempt, non-profit "Steel-Interstate Development Authority" (SIDA). SIDA will be a public-private partnership of government with the railroads, with the purpose of issuing tax-exempt bonds to finance, build, and operate the electrification and transmission infrastructure. SIDA will own a tax-exempt easement for the high-voltage power lines above the private railroad right of way. SIDA's quasi-public ownership of the electrification infrastructure circumvents the two current capitalization obstacles faced by the railroad industry:
- Raising private capital has high cost compared to raising public capital through SIDA;
 - If the expensive electrification infrastructure and improvements are privately owned, they would be subject to property tax, but not with the SIDA.

Sample talking point: "Solutionary Rail proposes a public-private partnership of government and industry through a tax-exempt, non-profit entity, the Steel-Interstate Development Authority (SIDA). SIDA would be responsible for issuing tax-exempt bonds to finance, build, and operate the electrification and transmission infrastructure."

5. **Public Benefits:** Solutionary Rail is not a corporate giveaway but a partnership that invigorates our transportation and energy infrastructure, creates jobs, respects tribal rights, and improves public health for those most impacted by poor air quality:
- For railroad workers, secures minimum crew sizes and labor conditions for safer trains and better jobs.
 - For underserved communities, returns scheduled freight and passenger service.
 - For tribal nations, requires resolution of easement issues.
 - For trackside and all communities, greens the electricity used to power the trains, towns, and cities, thus improving air quality and health.

Sample talking point: "Solutionary Rail promises many public benefits: jobs, health, respect for treaties, travel and economic opportunities – and a decarbonized transportation infrastructure for our children and grandchildren."

6. **Stakeholders:** The Solutionary Rail proposal has been created by a broad grassroots alliance of railroad workers, trackside communities, energy and transportation engineers, public health professionals, environmentalists, and public and private owners of utilities and land. It is essential for us to understand the public benefit promised by Solutionary Rail and to collaborate in creating this compelling, positive, and doable proposal that provides a win/win transportation and energy infrastructure centered on rail.

Sample Talking point: "Solutionary Rail is being advanced by a broad grassroots alliance of railroad workers, trackside communities, energy and transportation engineers, public health professionals, environmentalists, and tribes. Each of these diverse perspectives is essential to the Solutionary Rail vision."