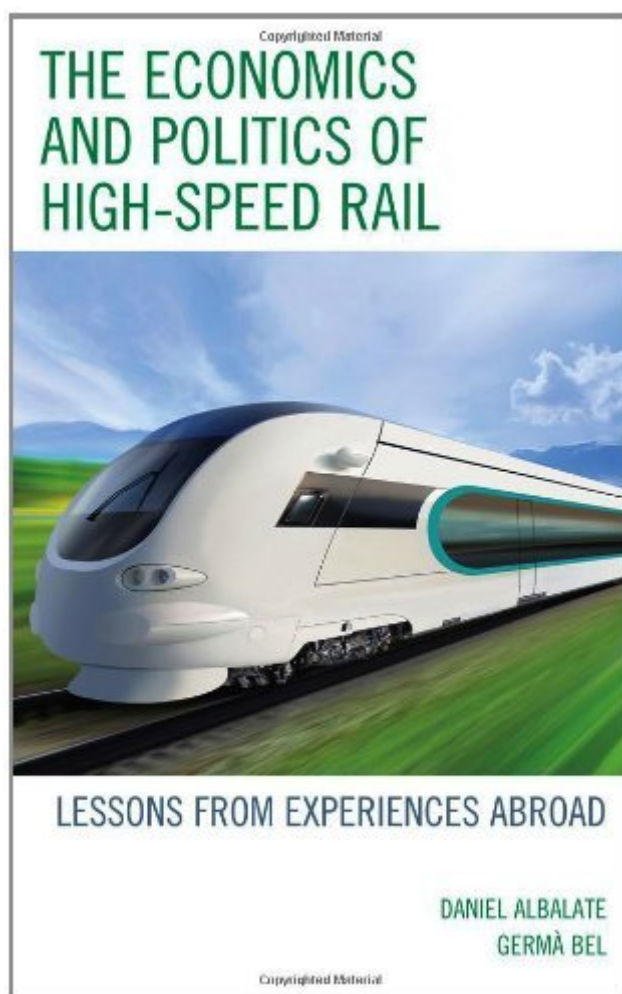


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The Economics And Politics Of High-Speed Rail: Lessons From Experiences Abroad



Synopsis

The technological revolution linked to high speed rail (HSR) has been accompanied by myths and claims about its contribution to society and the economy. Although HSR is unquestionably a technological advance that has become a symbol of modernity, this review and analysis of the international experiences shows that the conditions necessary to have a positive impact, economically, socially and environmentally, are enormously restrictive. The Economics and Politics of High Speed Rail: Lessons from Experiences Abroad, by Daniel Albalade and Germán Bel, introduces the main questions policy makers and scholars should examine when considering and studying HSR implementation, with particular emphasis on the US's recent interest in this technology and possible application in California. Albalade and Bel then review the experiences of the most significant implementations of HSR around the globe. This in-depth international perspective includes chapters on the pioneers of HSR (Japan and France), the European followers (Germany, Spain and Italy), as well as Asian experiences in China, Taiwan, and Korea. Albalade and Bel's study provides a clear distinction between the myths and realities associated with this transportation innovation. Among the most relevant findings, this study highlights how HSR projects that do not satisfy highly restrictive conditions on mobility patterns, measured costs, and economically rational designs that make it desirable have been the source of huge financial debacles and the economic failure of HSR in most cases, which result in unfortunate consequences for taxpayers. The Economics and Politics of High Speed Rail is a rigorous investigation of the economic and political challenges and ramifications of implementing new public transportation technology.

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Customer Reviews

Well I give this book 4-stars, but with reservations. There are not many scholarly works on intercity passenger rail, at least not new work so this book is definitely valuable but it is sadly incomplete in that it only examines high-speed rail services of +250-kmp (155-mph) on newly built infrastructure. It is somewhat deficient in that its authors seem to know little about railways beyond the limited scope of the study. First with the deficient part, they the writers seemed unfamiliar with the jargon of the rail industry, for example stating that for the Shinkansen it was necessary to broaden the width of the track to 4.7 feet (the earlier narrow track measured 3.5 feet) to guarantee a more efficient service. This is technically correct but why not state that the Shinkansen used international Standard Gauge where the rails are 4 feet 8½ inches apart as in the first modern British railways opposed to the narrow Cape Gauge of 3 feet 6 inches which was adopted for the construction of cheaper railways in overseas British colonies? Or like many railway writers in Japan do, just use metric. That's how an experience railroad author would right using the terms and jargon of the subject matter. You might include a little bit of history, that as advised by British civil engineers Japan in the 19th Century had adopted the narrow gauge of 3ft.6in. (named after its use in South Africa) because it reduce construction costs but the wider gauge was necessary increase capacity and maintain stability at high speeds. The Standard Gauge with its odd width may have been adopted so that Shinkansen rolling-stock could be interchangeable with the rail systems in Europe and North America.

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