

What are the possible impacts of high-speed rail service on equestrian areas?

Mineta Transportation Institute report summarizes existing data to help address the question

San Jose, Calif., January 19, 2016 – What are the possible impacts of high-speed rail (HSR) service on equestrian areas, particularly those with horses? Researchers at the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) at San Jose State University summarized a review of existing scholarly and professional literature regarding the possible impacts from high-speed rail (HSR) routes on surrounding equine populations and equestrian recreation. The study also includes maps that help illustrate the distribution of equines and equine facilities in the Palmdale-Burbank area. The peer-reviewed report, *High-Speed Rail and Equine Issues*, is available for free download from <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1427.html>. The author was Peter Haas, PhD, working with research associate Allie Scrivener.

“Our team conducted an extensive search of various electronic bibliographic databases to identify relevant research,” said Dr. Haas. “In addition to academic sources, we also sought other sources of systematic research, such as government reports, to help identify the current state-of-the-art knowledge in this specific subject area. Because no original research was conducted, the project does not support specific recommendations for the California HSR system.”

The primary finding from the study is that very little research has been conducted concerning the possible impact of HSR systems on equines and equine facilities and recreation, suggesting that very few (if any) examples of such conflict exist. The existing related research has tended to focus on the effects of jet aircraft on wildlife, rather than on high-speed trains and livestock.

The following general findings were supported by existing research:

- Existing HSR lines operate below noise levels that would directly harm horses, and damage to horses has not been documented.
- Loud noises could potentially startle horses, which could have detrimental effects on the well-being of horses and their riders. However, estimates of the amount of noise that might startle horses are rough, and virtually no systematic research has been conducted to establish such criteria.
- The very few studies that seem the most relevant – i.e., those that explicitly seek to address the link between noise and a response from equines – uniformly conclude that horses tend to “habituate” to regularly repeated noises. However, this response pattern appears not to have been subject to systemic testing regarding the noise produced by high-speed trains.
- Perhaps most definitively, in commenting on a HSR proposal in the UK, the International League for the Protection of Horses has stated that “horses usually became habituated to repeated noise including that from passing trains, although it is acknowledged that there may be a short period of adjustment.”
- Maps created for this project suggest that equines and rail facilities commonly coexist throughout California and the US. In the Palmdale-Burbank area, HSR routes currently under consideration by the CSHRA pass near several existing equine facilities and

equestrian trails. However, existing rail service, roads, and highways also pass by these areas.

The mapping portion of the project entailed searching for relevant databases and other potential sources to indicate equine populations and activity, along with appropriate GIS technologies to create a straightforward, easily interpretable map or maps that reflect the density and specific locales of equine populations and activities in the relevant areas of California. Among the data sources tapped were equestrian trails, equestrian trail access points, and equestrian boarding facilities.

Tweet this: @MinetaTrans free report: Literature review of possible effects of HSR service on equestrian areas <http://ow.ly/Xhpqt>

The 35-page peer-reviewed report is available for free PDF download from <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1427.html>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) conducts research, education, and information transfer programs regarding surface transportation policy and management issues, especially related to transit. Congress established MTI in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. MTI won national re-designation competitions in 2002, 2006, and 2012. The Institute is funded through the US Department of Transportation, the US Department of Homeland Security, the California Department of Transportation, and public and private grants. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI, the lead institute for the nine-university Mineta National Transit Research Consortium, is affiliated with San Jose (CA) State University's College of Business. Visit transweb.sjsu.edu

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