



Student Government Association

Sam Houston State University

A member of The Texas State University System

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Esteemed Members of the Texas Senate Transportation Committee,

Thank you all for allowing me to speak on behalf of nearly 20,000 students of Sam Houston State University, it is truly an honor. We gather to discuss S.B. No. 1601, a proposed bill regarding imminent domain and high-speed rails. As the Student Body President of Sam Houston State University, I feel that it is my duty, responsibility, and privilege to speak towards the errors of this bill. I took an oath of office to represent, politically, the needs and desires of my constituents. I see it as my duty to ensure that my actions leave a real and lasting mark upon these students. By the time the Texas Central Railway is constructed the students I currently represent will be the ones using this mode of commerce and transportation. To ensure that the best interests of these citizens is met, we are taking action. In weighing our options, our Student Government has publically supported the construction of major infrastructure projects such as the Texas Central Railway.

While students will still be able to use this mode of transportation to travel from college to Houston or Dallas, it is the alumni of Sam Houston State University that will ultimately be most impacted. When counting the number of registered alumni of Sam Houston State University we find roughly 10,000 in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and 14,000 in the Houston region. These numbers match with our student demographics. This high speed rail line will create opportunity for business and employment throughout our region. Sam Houston State University has been ranked #1 in the State for placing graduates in the Texas Workforce within twelve months of graduation. Connecting two of the largest cities in the nation will allow for more connectivity and collaboration between our students, graduates, and employers. Transportation infrastructure improvements will only help our students, alumni, and our State.

Predominantly I am here today to speak in support of the Texas Central Railway, yet I still find it necessary to identify a number of unintended consequences to the passage of such a bill. The future of Texas is my concern. While I personally share the concerns of Senator Kolkhorst about imminent domain use, I do recognize its relevance and need for the State. This bill would prevent private entities in the State of Texas from building any other high speed rail in the future, not just the Texas Central Railway. In the future, whether it is years or decades, should our State find itself in need of a high speed rail system, the passage of this bill would force the government to be the only entity authorized to construct it. It is through a market economy that America has grown to be the dominant super-power in our world, and Texas as the economic powerhouse in this nation. Let us not force infrastructure needs to be handled by the state and continue to allow private entities an opportunity to satisfy the needs of our people. It is understandable to oppose the use of imminent domain, but instead of creating roadblocks for private enterprise let us create pro-market alternatives to this problem. We are wary of the implications that carving out an exemption, only for high speed rail, and binding our state to being the only authorized entity to use imminent domain.

Commerce, innovation, and growth can only occur through the collaboration and connection of our greatest resources, our citizens. Why erect barriers to prevent the opportunity for our citizens? As a leader from the Sam Houston State University Student Body I see the long-term benefits for our school, community, and State. I urge this committee to recognize the potential implications of such a bill for the long-term economic and innovative potential of our State. During these debates my office is always open to help the Great State of Texas to finding innovative solutions.

Spencer Copeland
Student Body President 2014 -2015
Sam Houston State University