

# **Shift focus toward making rail system more competitive**

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**USA Today Opinion**

Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and members of Congress are missing the point. The USA doesn't need more regulation of airlines or a passengers' bill of rights ("Passenger rights gain support," Money, Nov. 27; "Protections for fliers move at glacial speed," Our view, Air travel debate, Nov. 21).

The USA needs more passenger railways. Railway travel can be competitive for trips less than 500 miles and faster than air for trips less than 3 hours in duration. With fast, frequent and all-weather reliability, trains can capture market share from an overburdened air system and allow efficiency and customer service to return to the travel market.

Unlike the Europeans, Chinese and Japanese, Americans have allowed the passenger rail system to deteriorate. Our total reliance on our air system for long-distance transportation leaves Americans with one of the worst transportation systems among the world's leading industrialized nations. Delays, poor performance and indifferent customer service continue to show this.

Expanding existing airports will do nothing to help relieve our long-term travel needs, especially as our population continues to grow.

Also, the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, have shown Americans that total reliance on commercial aviation is extremely vulnerable. What has the United States done to change this in the six years since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington? The answer is not enough. As a consequence, there are fewer choices today. Isn't it time to rethink our public investments in transportation infrastructure? Shouldn't Americans have meaningful and viable travel choices?