



A LONG WAY TO GO: High-speed and inter-city rail corridors under consideration for development in America

America ready to be part of the rail world

Both Britain and America are slowly waking up to the importance of high-speed rail in combating climate change.

Transport Secretary Lord Adonis is expected to be a key speaker at a high-speed rail conference in London in March where plans for a UK network will be developed.

At a similar conference in Chicago in February, American experts are planning to devise ways of financing a high-speed rail network for the country.

Although there are still "deniers", climate change has been in the forefront of the news for more than a month because of the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen.

Of course in any realistic plan to deal with climate change, rail will be crucial, because of its proven environmental advantages over other modes.

Deutsche Bahn offered bargain tickets for people who wanted to go to Copenhagen.

Environmental campaigners in Britain, who have not always stressed the importance of rail, urged people to join the Euro-train at Brussels if they planned to go to Copenhagen. See picture, right.

Swedish Railways say you can travel by rail 15,000 times between Stockholm and Gothenberg before

RIGHT TRACK: An advert from the Campaign against Climate Change encouraged rail use

you equal the amount of CO2 you would produce by flying once on the same journey.

Unlike Britain, Sweden took action years ago to reduce its dependence on oil. Swedish Railways environmental director Marie Hagberg said: "Perhaps more people should be told what a huge difference it makes to travel by plane or take the train."

She added: "Three years ago we asked our customers why they take the train, and concern for the environment came in eighth place. Two years ago, it went up to fifth place

and last year it was in first place. The train is the future in Sweden." Even before the summit, both China and America had pledged to cut their emissions but China is acting faster than America. Its plans for a high-speed rail network are already well developed with a £180billion programme to build 35 high-speed lines within three years.

Expansion of the country's high-speed train network is a national priority and has also been designated as a core component of the government programme to

stimulate the economy. High-speed trains are expected to reduce demand for internal flights by 50%.

In November, China placed an order for 280 high-speed Siemens trainsets, to be built at Changchun and Tangshan.

China has also signed a deal to help Russia develop high-speed lines.

In Britain the focus has been on high-speed rail serving Heathrow and the West Midlands, but in September Greengauge 21 suggested another line via Stansted airport and Cambridge, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle.

You can download information from www.railwatch.org.uk and www.railfuture.org.uk