

Gov. Jerry Brown -- bullet train will keep U.S. out of Third World

Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times, 1-28-12

SACRAMENTO -- Gov. Jerry Brown is on a mission to prevent the United States from becoming a Third World country, and he says the solution is a high-speed railroad in California.

"We're not going to be a Third World country if I have anything to do with it," Brown said in a Friday morning interview on KCBS-AM in San Francisco. Fourteen countries already have high-speed rail, but the United States does not.

California's high-speed rail plan has come under increasing scrutiny as cost estimates rise, and the state auditor warned Tuesday that financing is "increasingly risky." Although \$12.5 billion has been secured for a rail line stretching from Los Angeles to San Francisco, the auditor said the entire project could end up costing \$117.6 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$98.5 billion.

During the interview, Brown fired back at critics, saying the rail line will be cheaper than roads and airports in the long run.

"This thing is going to be a lot less than some of the critics have said," he said, adding that "this will transform Central California."

Brown has made his mark as a penny-pincher, slashing the state budget in order to downsize California's looming deficit. But he's also sought to dream big, and the high-speed rail project is Exhibit A.

During his State of the State speech earlier this month, Brown likened the project to epic undertakings such as the Panama Canal, and he repeated such comparisons on Friday morning.

"Just like Lincoln can built the transcontinental railroad during the Civil War ... you've got to think big," he said.