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Right track: Hughes, Merritt reason for Amtrak optimism

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The efforts of two East Texas lawmakers to realistically explore high speed rail for this area deserve to be applauded.

State Rep. Bryan Hughes, R-Mineola, has filed a bill to study the feasibility of rapid rail passenger service in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Meanwhile, state Rep. Tommy Merritt, R-Longview, has introduced a bill to create a high speed rail authority for both the Texas-Louisiana and the Texas-Mexico border regions. Merritt's bill would provide funding for the effort toward high-speed rail.

Certainly, high-speed rail may be years away from reality and, yes, these are only studies, but efforts to examine mass transportation as an alternative for this area ought to be taken seriously.

Federal stimulus money may soon be available for these efforts and others that would also help strengthen Amtrak. Regardless, East Texans along with the rest of the country need to face some harsh realities. Among these are that the current low prices for gasoline won't endure forever and neither will the driving habits of the past.

No single initiative will serve to release us from the chains that make us dependent on foreign — often volatile — countries for fuel to keep this country moving. But examining closely the possible solutions is something that should be done judiciously and expeditiously.

That is why steps like those taken by Hughes and Merritt deserve consideration and support.
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