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Our districts are 350 miles apart. One is in California's largest urban region. The other embraces a rapidly changing and urbanizing piece of California's heartland.

Our constituents see very different landscapes, but we see eye-to-eye on one important piece of their future: We need to improve the state's passenger rail system.

We're not into browbeating Californians out of their cars. We want to give them a better alternative, and we think the best way to do that is a tweak to the current plan by the High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA).

The plan developed by our Assembly colleagues is a way to help more Californians sooner, but we need to get more Californians on board.

We want to save some of the funds currently aimed at electrification and some smaller aspects of the HSRA plan. We can use those dollars to bolster rail where it is needed most.

The San Joaquin Valley would still get a higher-speed passenger line, up to 125 mph.

With the savings, we could connect that line to others so people could have a one-seat ride — no need to transfer — from Bakersfield through Modesto to the Bay Area, or to Sacramento.

Some are leery of using some funds for improving MetroLink. Boosting that line is appropriate because the Los Angeles region has some of the greatest pent-up demand for rail service.

Freeing up funds could also benefit projects like Valley Link, which is designed to provide a link from the ACE Train in Lathrop through the Altamont Pass to BART in Dublin/Pleasanton.

We hear stories of the supercommuters who spend hours driving through jams in each direction, going from homes in the north part of the Valley to the Bay Area for jobs. The HSRA plan does little for those people. It provides no direct connection.

At the very least, our plan would connect the line from the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley to stations served by Valley Link or the ACE Train, depending on where they are traveling.

Does this mean we're giving up on high-speed rail through California? Absolutely not.

Valley Link's slogan is "Connecting people, housing, and jobs." We believe that a long-distance line will connect more people and lead to more housing and jobs in the San Joaquin Valley than the current plan.

It will quickly put millions of people in train seats in Southern California, in the San Joaquin Valley, and in the Bay Area. Quickly, because the convenience of getting from home to jobs on unimpeded rails will be obvious to would-be passengers.

That's what will sell investors and developers on the concept of upgrading to a full high-speed line on a route that will already be there, and will already have customers.

This is not a plan that robs Peter to pay Paul. This is a plan for investing already approved funds in a way that will provide enough dividends to make both happy — and spread the advantages of rail travel across California.

Not just southeast LA County and the northern San Joaquin Valley, but everywhere in between, and extending beyond those points on both ends.

Anthony Rendon, California Assembly speaker, represents southeast Los Angeles County. Assemblywoman Susan Eggman's district is based in San Joaquin County, and she is running for a state Senate district that includes north Stanislaus County. Both are Democrats.