

# Thailand to spend \$68 bn on transport projects

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A man cooks barbecue chicken as a train passes by shack houses in Bangkok. Thailand's cabinet has approved a plan to spend \$68 bn on a high-speed railway and other transportation mega projects to drive the nation's economic development.

Thailand's cabinet on Tuesday approved a plan to spend \$68 billion on a high-speed railway and other transportation mega projects to drive the nation's economic development.

Under the seven-year scheme, 200 high-speed trains will whizz across the kingdom on four lines linking the capital Bangkok with the north, south and east of the country.

"The projects, which will focus on electric trains and dual tracks, will completely change Thailand, and they will start next year," said Transport Minister Chatchai Sitthipan.

The high-speed rail lines will be built in two stages and eventually link Bangkok with the Malaysian and Lao borders, as well as the northern city of Chiang Mai, the seaside resort of Pattaya and areas further to the east.

The new trains will be capable of travelling at up to 250 kilometres (155 miles) per hour, reducing [travel time](#) from Bangkok to northern Thailand to four hours from 12 hours, a cabinet document said.

The average speed of passenger trains on Thailand's existing national network is 60 kilometres per hour.

Under the new plan, the government aims to increase the [average speed](#) to between 100 and 120 kilometres per hour. A metropolitan rail network is also envisaged for Bangkok.



A skytrain, part of Bangkok's first mass transit system, makes its way above city street in 1998. Under a new \$68 bn scheme, 200 high-speed trains will whizz across Thailand on four lines linking the capital Bangkok with the north, south and east of the country.

The government plans to borrow 2.0 trillion baht (\$68 billion) to fund the project, subject to parliamentary approval, as part of its efforts to avoid the "middle income trap" of slowing [economic growth](#).

The [finance ministry](#) said it hoped the investment would boost Thailand's annual economic growth by one percentage point on average between 2013 and 2020 and create 500,000 [new jobs](#).

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