

CERCA SET **Railway Infrastructure**
English Language Arts

What factors should the U.S. government take into account when making decisions about investing in rail infrastructure?

LESSON TITLE **Still Working on the Railroad**

CERCA QUESTION Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

RESOURCES

- **Build Background Knowledge**
<https://www.pinterest.com/thinkcerca/railway-infrastructure-cerca-set-board/>
- **CERCA Framework**
- **Vocabulary Routine**
- **Speaking and Listening Routines**

Whole group	Online
Small group	Offline
Individual activity	Activity time period
Speaking and listening activity	Audio
Available in English and Spanish	

Introduce the CERCA Question



Make sure students understand the term “passenger rail services”; you can support understanding with visuals. Then help students understand the concept of funding: that the government pays money (which it gets from taxes and fees) to build or maintain certain services.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

► **ASK:** What are some other things in our community that the government funds?

Support language acquisition with the sentence frame:

The government funds _____.

1 Connect



Have students log in to ThinkCERCA and click into this lesson.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Read the overview aloud and discuss vocabulary. Then read the writing prompt aloud for students before they answer.

Complete Step 1: Connect.

Introduce Vocabulary



Use **Semantic Webbing** to introduce vocabulary.

► **NOTE:** Some students will need support for additional words not listed on the student support page. Weave them into the instruction.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Assign vocabulary words to small groups, or to partners. For small groups, assign a word and have them map it out on the whiteboard. Depending on student familiarity with the vocabulary words you can create webs for all new words, or just the most challenging words. When they are finished they can take a minute to explain it while classmates copy the map down. For partner work, have mixed ability pairs create maps for all assigned words in their notebooks.

After the routine have students add the focus words to their word notebooks.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students discuss any personal experiences that they’ve had with trains (if they’ve ridden a local or commuter train, or a cross-country train) and other things they know about trains.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Complete Step 1: Connect.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students work in pairs to write their own definition of the word in English. Next, have them brainstorm an image or mental picture to illustrate each word.

After the routine have students add the focus words to their word notebooks.

Introduce the Summary

En | Sp

Remind students that this is a summary for the passage they will read. Point out the Vocabulary as you read.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Have students read the Spanish version on the student support page, if applicable, before you read the summary aloud and have students follow along.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Ask a student to read aloud the summary in English to practice their fluency.

2 Read

Have students read the text, using Vocabulary from the student support page as appropriate.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Read comprehension questions with students before they begin reading the passage.

 Complete Step 2: Read.

 Discuss comprehension questions. Point out key vocabulary words in the text, especially as they are relevant to finding answers.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Complete Step 2: Read.

 Discuss comprehension questions. Point out key vocabulary words in the text, especially as they are relevant to finding answers.

3 Engage with the Text

 **NOTE:** If you have concerns that your students are struggling with comprehension, you may wish to work with them on Step 4: Summarize before Step 3: Engage with the Text.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Model highlighting the text for students.

 Complete Step 3: Engage with the Text.

 Use the following sentence frames to discuss the highlights students made.
The government should fund railroads because _____.
The government should not fund railroads because _____.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Complete Step 3: Engage with the Text.

 Discuss the highlighting students did. Ask students to share their highlights and notes, and use the following sentence stems to support student engagement in the conversation.

There are many reasons for the government to fund railroads, such as _____ and _____.
However, there are other reasons that the government should not fund railroads, such as _____.

4 Summarize



Prepare students to write a CERCA by having them summarize the text.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Complete a summary of the article together using either the suggested sentence frames below or the stems in the product. Encourage students to use Vocabulary from the lesson.

Use the following sentence frames to create a summary.

Train travel used by _____ for _____.

There are many reasons that the government should fund railroads, such as _____.

However, there are other reasons that the government should not fund railroads, such as _____.

Complete Step 4: Summarize.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Complete Step 4: Summarize.

Review the summaries to ensure that all students understand the big ideas of the passage. Encourage students to use Vocabulary from the lesson.

5 Build Your Argument



Practice creating a CERCA together using the CERCA graphic organizer (online or offline) and the leveled frames below and on the student support pages. Remind students that some of their evidence can come from their highlighting work.

NOTE: You may wish to have students orally respond to the CERCA question using a Listening and Speaking Routine instead of writing a response.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Use the following sentence frames to complete the CERCA graphic organizer.

Claim *Passenger rail services [should/should not] be funded by the government*

Reason *because _____.*

Evidence *[An advantage/a disadvantage] of using the rail system _____*

Reasoning *which means that _____.*

Complete Step 5: Build Your Argument.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students share their thoughts with the group.

Use the following sentence frames to complete the CERCA graphic organizer.

Claim *Passenger rail services [should/should not] be funded by the government*

Reason *because _____.*

Evidence *[An advantage/A disadvantage] of using the rail system is _____,*

Reasoning *which means that _____.*

Evidence *Today, many people argue that the rail system _____,*

Reasoning *which _____.*

Have students complete the graphic organizer with at least one more piece of evidence and associated reasoning. Assist as needed.

Complete Step 5: Build Your Argument.

6 Create Your CERCA



Have students write their CERCA in the lesson online so that you can provide feedback and monitor growth.

NOTE: Remind students that they can use the Copy all button to move their work into the text box.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Use the responses students made in the graphic organizer to model writing in response to the CERCA question.

 Have students reread their draft. Then have them submit to complete Step 6: Write Your CERCA.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Have students write their CERCA. Provide support as necessary. Remind students that they can use vocabulary words as they write.

 Use this sentence frame to help students conclude their CERCA:
It is best for the government [to/not to] fund railroads because _____.

 Have students add a conclusion and then reread their draft. Then have them submit to complete Step 6: Write Your CERCA.

Complete Speaking and Listening Activities



Complete a whole group speaking and listening activity with all students who completed the grade level lesson. Prompt students to use the vocabulary from the passage in the activity.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Do the **Think-Pair-Share** activity.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Do the **Think-Pair-Share** activity.

Modify this activity by having students start with simple partner talk and then expand to small group discussion (4-6 students).

LESSON **Still Working on the Railroad**

CERCA QUESTION Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

Vocabulary

*benefits (noun): good results

clogging (noun): blocking

*convenient (adj.): easy; suitable

corporation (noun): business

*dilemma (noun): a difficult problem

*efficient (adj.): working in a well-organized way

funded (verb): provided money for

interstate (adj.): nationwide

*legislation (noun): a law

leisurely (adj.): casual; unhurried

*passenger (noun): a traveler

pleasant (adj.): nice, agreeable

Vocabulary continued

*profit (noun): money a business earns after paying for its costs

Western Hemisphere (proper noun): the west half of the globe containing the Americas

Summary

Today travelers have lots of choices when they want to travel. Cars are private and convenient. They can take you anywhere, but it might be a long trip. Airplanes are fast, but they can be expensive. Buses don't cost a lot, but the ride is not always pleasant. Until the 1950s, passenger trains were the most popular and efficient way to travel long distances. That changed when government began to build interstate highways so that people could drive their cars more easily cross-country. At the same time, the airlines grew bigger and bigger, with new jet planes and more airports. But the U.S. government didn't want train travel to stop. All those cars were beginning to crowd cities, making traffic jams a way of life. Not everyone could afford air travel.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed legislation combining all private passenger rail services into one corporation, called Amtrak, to be funded by the government for two years. After that, it was expected to pay for itself. However, Amtrak never made a profit. That means that the federal and state governments still support it. This causes a lot of debate. Many people think that it is a waste of government money, because it carries too few passengers. However, others argue that the rail system plays a valuable role in moving people from city to city without clogging roads or requiring huge airports. They say this means it deserves government support, like the highways.

Still Working on the Railroad

Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

¿Los servicios de trenes para pasajeros deberían ser financiados por el gobierno?

Vocabulary

English

***benefits**

(noun): good results

clogging

(noun): blocking

***convenient**

(adj.): easy; suitable

corporation

(noun): business

***dilemma**

(noun): a difficult problem

***efficient**

(adj.): working in a well-organized way

funded

(verb): provided money for

interstate

(adj.): nationwide

***legislation**

(noun): a law

leisurely

(adj.): casual; unhurried

***passenger**

(noun): a traveler

pleasant

(adj): nice, agreeable

Español

***beneficios**

(sustantivo): buenos resultados

obstrucción

(sustantivo): bloqueo

***conveniente**

(adjetivo): fácil; adecuado

corporación

(sustantivo): negocio

***dilema**

(sustantivo): un problema difícil

***eficiente**

(adjetivo): que funciona de una manera bien organizada

financiar

(verbo): proporcionar dinero

interestatal

(adjetivo): a escala nacional

***legislación**

(sustantivo): una ley

lento

(adjetivo): casual; sin prisa

***pasajero**

(sustantivo): un viajero

agradable

(adjetivo): grato, atractivo

Vocabulary continued

***profit**

(noun): money a business earns after paying for its costs

***ganancias**

(sustantivo): el dinero que una empresa obtiene después de pagar sus costos

Western Hemisphere

(proper noun): the west half of the globe containing the Americas

hemisferio occidental

(sustantivo): la mitad oeste del globo que contiene las Américas

LESSON TITLE **Still Working on the Railroad**

CERCA QUESTION Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

¿Los servicios de trenes para pasajeros deberían ser financiados por el gobierno?

Summary

English Today travelers have lots of choices when they want to travel. Cars are private and convenient. They can take you anywhere, but it might be a long trip. Airplanes are fast, but they can be expensive. Buses don't cost a lot, but the ride is not always pleasant. Until the 1950s, passenger trains were the most popular and efficient way to travel long distances. That changed when government began to build interstate highways so that people could drive their cars more easily cross-country. At the same time, the airlines grew bigger and bigger, with new jet planes and more airports. But the U.S. government didn't want train travel to stop. All those cars were beginning to crowd cities, making traffic jams a way of life. Not everyone could afford air travel. In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed legislation combining all private passenger rail services into one corporation, called Amtrak, to be funded by the government for two years. After that, it was expected to pay for itself. However, Amtrak never made a profit. That means that the federal and state governments still support it. This causes a lot of debate. Many people think that it is a waste of government money, because it carries too few passengers. However, others argue that the rail system plays a valuable role in moving people from city to city without clogging roads or requiring huge airports. They say this means it deserves government support, like the highways.

Español Los viajeros de hoy en día tienen un montón de opciones cuando quieren viajar. Los automóviles son privados y convenientes. Pueden llevarte a cualquier lugar, pero podría ser un viaje largo. Los aviones son rápidos, pero pueden ser costosos. Los autobuses no cuestan mucho, pero el viaje no siempre es agradable. Hasta la década de 1950, los trenes de pasajeros fueron la forma más popular y eficiente de viajar largas distancias. Eso cambió cuando el gobierno comenzó a construir carreteras interestatales para que la gente pudiera conducir sus autos más fácilmente entre los estados. Al mismo tiempo, las compañías aéreas se hicieron más y más grandes, con nuevos aviones y más aeropuertos. Sin embargo, el gobierno de Estados Unidos no quería que los viajes en tren se detuvieran. Todos los automóviles comenzaban a obstruir las ciudades, haciendo de los atascos de tráfico, una forma de vida. No todo el mundo podía permitirse viajar en avión. En 1970, el presidente Richard Nixon firmó la legislación que combinaba todos los servicios ferroviarios de pasajeros privados en una sola corporación, llamada Amtrak, que sería financiada por el gobierno durante dos años. Después de eso, se esperaba que se mantuviera sola. Sin embargo, Amtrak nunca obtuvo ganancias. Esto significa que los gobiernos federales y estatales aún lo financian. Esto provoca un gran debate. Mucha gente piensa que es un desperdicio de dinero del gobierno, ya que lleva muy pocos pasajeros. Sin embargo, otros argumentan que el sistema ferroviario juega un papel valioso en el movimiento de la gente entre ciudades sin obstruir los caminos ni requerir grandes aeropuertos. Ellos dicen que esto significa que merece el apoyo del gobierno, como las autopistas.

Still Working on the Railroad

Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

4 Summarize

Train travel used by _____ for _____.

There are many reasons that the government should fund railroads, such as _____.

However, there are other reasons that the government should not fund railroads, such as _____.

5 Build Your Argument

Claim *Passenger rail services [should/should not] be funded by the government*

Reason *because _____.*

Evidence *[An advantage/A disadvantage] of using the rail system*
_____.

Reasoning *which means that _____.*

Still Working on the Railroad

Should passenger rail services be funded by the government?

5 Build Your Argument

Claim *Passenger rail services [should/should not] be funded by the government*

Reason *because* _____.

Evidence *[An advantage/A disadvantage] of using the rail system is* _____,

Reasoning *which means that* _____.

Evidence *Today, many people argue that the rail system* _____,

Reasoning *which* _____.

6 Create Your CERCA

It is best for the government [to/not to] fund railroads because

_____.