

Jerry Brown meets with Republicans, ‘cautiously optimistic’ about Caltrain approval



Gov. Jerry Brown on Tuesday, March 21, 2017, said he's hopeful the state could receive federal approval for a stalled rail project in the Bay Area. **Christopher Cadelago** ccadelago@sacbee.com

BY CHRISTOPHER CADELAGO | MARCH 21, 2017 2:54 PM | ccadelago@sacbee.com

With his mind on bipartisan cooperation, Gov. Jerry Brown emerged from meetings Tuesday optimistic that California could receive approval for a stalled rail project to shuttle riders between Silicon Valley and San Francisco.

“It’s difficult. We’re not there yet,” Brown said, after meeting with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy. “But I am cautiously optimistic that we are going to find a way to fund Caltrain.”

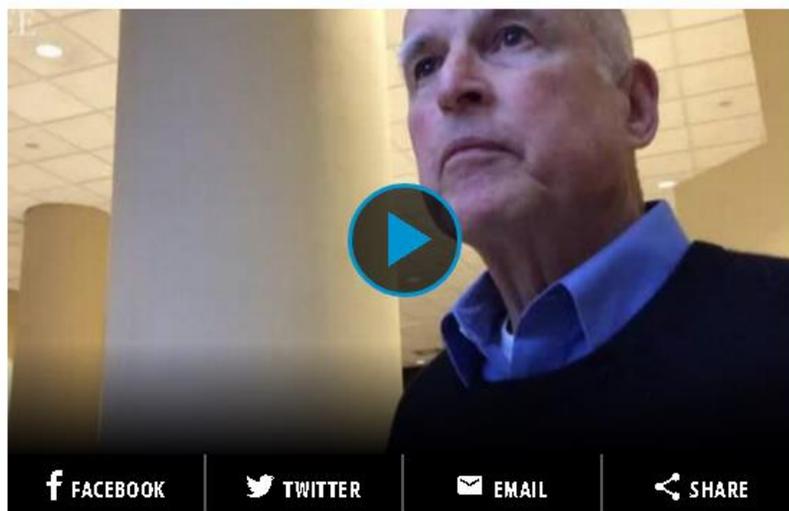
Brown's meetings follow his personal appeals to Chao asking her to reconsider a nearly \$650 million grant to electrify Caltrain, which serves more than 60,000 riders each weekday and is being heavily lobbied for by deep-pocketed Bay Area interests.

The Democratic governor is hoping to receive tens of billions of dollars worth of infrastructure funding from the federal government for projects ranging from roads to levee repairs. Caltrain is a small project among many. But it's viewed as an early test of whether the Trump administration and congressional Republicans will assist California.

Chao delayed the grant after McCarthy and the rest of the California House Republican delegation wrote a letter asking for it to be blocked. GOP members argue that it's become too intertwined with Brown's high-speed rail system, which they strongly oppose.

"The money is the money ... There's a lot of money flowing," Brown said to reporters outside the federal Department of Transportation on Tuesday. "And we'll take it from where ever we can. So, you move money here, you move money there. I don't know quite how.

"But, somehow. People want to do something different. Maybe a little dance step to the left. A little dance step to the right. Maybe hocus pocus, it all comes out. This is part of the way Washington works."



Gov. Jerry Brown reflects on being the leader of California and what he hopes to collaborate on with Donald Trump on during a session with reporters in Washington on March 20, 2017.

Christopher Cadelago The Sacramento Bee

'Nothing is all that predictable' under Trump, Jerry Brown says

Brown's office tweeted a photo of the Democratic governor and Republican leader from Bakersfield sitting under a painting of Abraham Lincoln.

McCarthy did not mention the project specifically in a statement shared by his office following his second meeting of the day with Brown. But the statement said the two men discussed infrastructure, health care and innovation.

McCarthy championed the Republican health care bill Congress is moving as a replacement for Obamacare as giving states increased flexibility to provide necessary assistance to people experiencing hardship and said it places the Medicaid program on "sustainable footing." Brown has been deeply critical of the replacement effort and plans to attend a Wednesday event at the U.S. Capitol to mark the 7th anniversary of the Affordable Care Act.

Brown's visits with Chao, McCarthy and California House Republicans were among a handful of his closed-door exchanges on his second day in Washington. But they were likely his most significant stops given that many of his biggest-ticket items require the support of Republicans and the Trump administration.

There was little disagreement between Brown and members of his state's House Democratic delegation led by Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi described the conversation, during which Brown sat at the head of a long table, as "wide-ranging," saying they talked about confronting climate change, recovering from the winter storms, protecting infrastructure investments, including Caltrain electrification, and standing by Obamacare.

Brown, reflecting on the day outside the transportation agency, said he would continue his outreach efforts with Republicans.

"I can't say we're there yet, but you don't build Rome in a day," Brown said.

He added: "I am not coming here like Martin Luther in 1517 putting my ... theses on the Wittenberg church. I am here to negotiate, to make friends and to advance the cause of California."

Christopher Cadelago: 916-326-5538, @ccadelago

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