



Officials press Trump to help electrify Caltrain

By Jerold Chinn | April 25, 2017

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-San Francisco/San Mateo, is calling for President Donald Trump to release funds from the Federal Transit Administration that will go toward the modernization and electrification of Caltrain.

Nearly \$647 million from the FTA's Capital Investment Grant Program was to go toward the \$2 billion Caltrain electrification project, but the funding is now in jeopardy after the funds were put on hold by the FTA in February even after Caltrain and the FTA staff had worked together to meet all the statutory and regulatory requirements for the grant.

Speier said other projects in at least in 19 states could also be jeopardy costing thousands of jobs:

"The presidents keeps saying 'Make America Great Again,' but the president's proposal would really make America stop."

The temporary stop at the moment of the Caltrain electrification project is costing 9,600 jobs, including the Utah where the trains are being manufactured, said Speier.

Speier also alluded to California Republican congressional members who sent a letter to the Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, urging to reconsider the grant because of the rising cost of the state's high-speed rail project:

“You cannot sabotage this program because you don’t like where some of the money is coming from. That’s double talk, not straight talk.”

The electrification Caltrain project has been in the works for two decades, said Jeff Gee, chair of the the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board.

Gee said that electrification project would be capable of transporting 100,000 passengers from San Francisco to San Jose in about 45 minutes. Gee added:

“We must educate the new administration and congressional Republicans about the importance and readiness of this project.”

Currently, more than 60,000 people commute on Caltrain, said Gee.

Mayor Ed Lee said that ridership has more than doubled in the last 10 years, and that the system is “bursting at the seams.”

In February, Caltrain and its contractors negotiated an extension for contractors to begin to construction from March 1 to June 30. Officials at Caltrain said extending the construction start will likely require the transit agency to use \$20 million contingency funds that would have been other wised used for future construction-related expenses.