

# 14 Republicans derail Caltrain electrification project

MACGREGOR 'GOYA' EDDY 4:29 p.m. PT March 2, 2017



(Photo: Copyright 2000)

Fourteen California Republicans opposed to High Speed Rail sent a letter to the US Department of Transportation on Feb. 17 requesting that the DOT stop federal funding for the Caltrain electrification.

In response to this letter, on Friday, newly confirmed Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao blocked a \$647 million dollar federal grant for the electrification of Caltrain, thus halting the shovel-ready project. The construction would have started this week.

Monday, Caltrain announced it had negotiated a three-month extension with the contractors responsible for the rail line's electrification project, a delay that will cost \$20 million. The supporters of Caltrain hope to restore the

funding to the project.

Caltrain is the heavily used commuter train between Gilroy and San Francisco; it needs electrification even if the High Speed Rail is never built. The ridership has doubled in the past decade and it now carries more than 60,000 people per day. The electrification will increase capacity of Caltrain as well as reduce noise and pollution, to say nothing of reducing traffic in a car-choked region.

"This is very troubling," said Adina Levin, executive director of Friends of Caltrain. "Not only for Caltrain corridor commuters ... but as an ominous sign for federal government support for transit infrastructure."

"We want to keep the message going toward the White House and to the Secretary of Transportation that this is a vital service," said Rosanne Foust, president and CEO of the San Mateo County Economic Development Association. "It connects the innovation economy; it's environmentally friendly."

The area that Caltrain serves is a vital part of the domestic economy. According to Carl Guardino, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, the region served by Caltrain represents 14% of California's gross domestic product, and 43% of all venture capital investment in the US.

The funding is delayed, not eliminated, so the project could be saved. Caltrain has a petition, at <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/support-9600-american-jobs-tell-fta-approve-funding-caltrain-electrification>.

The petition states:

*"Mr. Trump, you have said infrastructure and jobs will be a keystone of your administration. When you spoke with Silicon Valley leaders you praised their innovation and said 'anything we can do to help this go along, we're going to be there for you.' In talks with Japanese Prime Minister Abe, he cited high speed rail as technology that could create prosperity and thousands of US jobs.*

*"Shovel-ready transportation projects would put Americans to work in good manufacturing and infrastructure jobs. Caltrain electrification would support over 9,600 Americans, not only in California, but in states including Utah, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.*

*"Direct the FTA to approve the \$647 million in funding for Caltrain electrification."*

The 14 California legislators who wrote the letter to Elaine Chao opposing the electrification of Caltrain are: Ken Calvert, Paul Cook, Jeff Denham, Duncan D. Hunter, Darrell Issa, Steve Knight, Doug LaMalfa, Kevin McCarthy, Tom McClintock, Devin Nunes, Dana Rohrabacher, Ed Royce, David Valadao and Mimi Walters.

## Family bike ride

**Saturday, noon to 2 p.m.** Family Biking Monterey County will ride from Roberts Lake to Laguna Grande Park at 1249 Canyon Del Rey Blvd., Seaside. Meet at the parking lot by Roberts Lake. For more information, email Lauryn at [riciglianolaurn@gmail.com](mailto:riciglianolaurn@gmail.com)

## Train policy committee

**Monday, 3 p.m.** The Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) Rail Policy Committee will meet at 55 Plaza Circle, Salinas. Agenda is available at [www.tamcmonterey.org](http://www.tamcmonterey.org) (<http://www.tamcmonterey.org>)

## Salinas Traffic and Transportation

**Thursday 7 p.m.** Salinas Traffic and Transportation Commission will meet in at the Salinas City Rotunda, 200 Lincoln. The agenda is available at the city website. You can watch the most recent meeting on the Salinas YouTube channel.

Send questions or comments to MacGregor Eddy (Goya) at [wecouldcarless@gmail.com](mailto:wecouldcarless@gmail.com) (<mailto:wecouldcarless@gmail.com>)

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