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Santa Clarita, California Legislators Call For High-Speed Rail Re-Vote

Posted by: KHITS Newsroom | In Politics, Santa Clarita Latest News | July 7, 2015 - 2:15 pm | 1 Comment | 802 Views

Ed. Note: Kimberly Beers contributed to this report.

Several California legislators are looking to host a public re-vote of the 2008 voter-approved high-speed officials said Tuesday.

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A total of eight bills proposing to halt funding and allow the public to respond to changes in the High-Speed Rail Plan have been proposed, but each has been shut down by the legislature.

"California's high-speed rail program will alleviate pressure on our state's current transportation network and in concert with other state, regional and local rail investments, as part of a broad statewide rail modernization program, provide both immediate and long-term environmental and community benefits statewide," said Authority spokeswoman Lisa Marie Alley. "This transportation program is already improving California by creating new jobs and supporting vital transportation infrastructure investments for a growing population."

Recently, Senators Andy Vidak, R-Hanford, and Rudy Salas, D-Bakersfield, have co-authored a bipartisan bill to stop funding for the rail until a public re-vote can be taken on June 7, 2016, as a news release.

"The high-speed rail of today is not what the voters approved in 2008," Vidak said in a news release. "Californians deserve the right to re-vote on this massive transportation project that could cost hundreds of billions of dollars if it is ever completed. The money would be better spent on local roads and highways."

Assemblyman Scott Wilk, R-Santa Clarita, has been a strong opponent of the high-speed rail project since the beginning, and says he agrees with Vidak.

"Our money would be better spent on other priorities, including our school systems, water storage plans, roads and bridges," Wilk said.

Wilk argues that the high-speed rail project now, is very different from the original plan in 2008.

"The High-Speed Rail Authority has failed to obtain private investment as promised to the voters and is now relying California's controversial cap-and-trade program to help fund the project," to a press release by Vidak.

If the legislative body does not pass the bill, it is possible for the people to appeal directly for a re-vote, via the State of California's ballot initiative process, according to the State of California Department of Justice. The process involves submitting an initiative draft to the Attorney General, the circulation of petitions to collect signatures, and the approval or denial of the ballot initiative voters.

More about the High-Speed Rail Project

Two bills taking aim at the state's high-speed rail plan didn't make it out of the state Assembly's Transportation Committee this past April, officials said.

Assembly Bill 6 and AB 1138 both sought to derail the state's rail plans — AB 6, introduced by Assemblyman Scott Wilk, R-Santa Clarita, sought to defund the plan by preventing the sale of land for it, instead using the money for school. AB 1138 would have limited the High Speed Rail Authority's ability to use eminent domain in order to acquire land for the rail.

About 1,500 Santa Clarita Valley residents booed, clapped and cheered as Santa Clarita hosted a meeting Monday night at Canyon High ostensibly to decry the high speed rail plan.

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