

Feds give California high-speed rail 3-month funding extension

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/02/23/3787537/high-speed-rail-given-extension.html>

The Associated Press

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Federal transportation officials have extended the deadline three months, to July 1, that the California High-Speed Rail Authority has to start spending more state money on the project.

As a condition of federal grants, the project must put up state money to match the federal dollars.

[The Los Angeles Times reported](#) that with the deadline changed from April 1, the Legislature could move on Gov. Jerry Brown's request to transfer \$250 million to the bullet train from the state's ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The three-month extension is part of a new state-funding contribution plan.

California High-Speed Rail Authority chief Jeff Morales wrote in a Feb. 20 letter to the Federal Railroad Administration that, among other things, delays in the start of construction and acquisition of property in the Central Valley made the new funding plan necessary.

Construction is not likely to start before this summer, putting the project more than a year behind the schedule that rail officials described in 2012.

The train, with a current price tag estimated at \$68 billion, would connect Southern California to the San Francisco Bay area. Voters approved it with a 2008 ballot measure, and Brown has been a staunch supporter.

But the project has been beset in recent years by opposition and apparently diminishing political support within California.

At a state Senate hearing last year, rail officials assured lawmakers that the state would prevail against lawsuits and be able to repay the loan from \$9 billion in voter-approved bonds designated for the project. But a Sacramento judge blocked access to that money in the fall after finding the rail agency failed to comply with legal restrictions on the bonds. State lawyers are trying to overturn that decision.

Under the new plan, the state expects to access its bond fund next year. In the letter, Morales said the state has spent \$95 million of California's money, versus grant disbursements of \$255 million, the newspaper reported.