

Lawmakers seek to tighten bullet train oversight, suggesting growing concern about the project

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A key state legislative committee on Monday unanimously approved a Republican-led bill to strengthen oversight of the California [bullet train](#), a sign of growing bipartisan concern about the project.



The bill, which would set new reporting requirements for the \$64-billion bullet train project, was approved by the Assembly Transportation Committee. Until the last six months, the Democrat-controlled Legislature largely had kept its hands off the project, which enjoys strong support from Gov. Jerry Brown and the Obama administration.

But a series of recent hearings and a key report by the Legislative Analyst's Office have intensified questions about the project's cost, schedule and scope.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority's recent decision to abandon starting an initial segment in Burbank and switch to a lower-cost segment in San Jose also has caught the attention of legislators, who say the change is worrisome.

The bill, AB 2847, adopts two key recommendations by the Legislative Analyst's Office. The measure would require the rail authority to provide detailed cost, schedule and scope information about each segment and to disclose how each of those segments would be financed.

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The bill was introduced by Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno), who said the project was rushing ahead without a sustainable plan that would ensure completion by the scheduled 2029 start-up for trains from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

The committee's action reflected those concerns.

"It is the awakening of the magnitude of the issue in front of us," Patterson said. "The project has moved from spotty opposition in the Legislature to growing concern."

The transportation committees in the Assembly and the Senate have held intensive hearings this year, after years of conducting no public oversight.

"I am committed to stringent oversight of the high-speed rail project," Assembly committee Chairman Jim Frazier (D-Oakley) said, noting it had bipartisan support. "Adding more information to the authority's business plan will increase awareness and understanding of the project's scope and costs."

The analyst's office had recommended that the rail authority provide more information about how a \$43-billion gap in funding the construction would be closed.

Rail authority chief Dan Richard has said repeatedly in recent weeks that it should not be necessary to identify

where all of the money will come from, noting that existing funds were surprises and that future unexpected funding should not be discounted.

Patterson said that strategy is not likely to assuage the Legislature.

The bill is likely to be referred to the Appropriations Committee and, if it is accepted, to the full Assembly, legislative staffers said.

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