

California asks Uncle Sam for \$4.6 billion for high-speed trains

September 25th, 2009, 2:33 pm · 25 Comments · posted by Teri Sforza, Register staff writer

Imagine whizzing from Anaheim to San Francisco in just two hours and 57 minutes on a high-speed train, to enjoy dim sum in Chinatown.

For \$40 billion or so, it might just come to pass!

On Thursday, the California High-Speed Rail Authority decided to apply for \$4.57 billion in Federal High-Speed Rail Stimulus Funding for 10 projects throughout the state. That includes:

- \$2 billion for the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment,
- \$1.28 billion for the San Francisco to San Jose segment,
- \$819 million for the Fresno to Bakersfield segment, and
- \$466 million for the Merced to Fresno segment.

California would use state bond funds - from the recent passage of Proposition 1A, the High-Speed Rail Act, to match federal money dollar for dollar. The money would pay for preliminary engineering, project-level environmental work, mitigation, final design and construction.

Each of these segments is supposed to come online by Sept. 30, 2017.

This doesn't mean we *have* the money, of course, but we're in a good position to get our eager little hands on at least *some* of it. Why?

"California is the only state in the nation to have passed a high-speed rail bond measure, which demonstrates the public's commitment to funding the nation's first high-speed, 220 mile-per-hour train system," said Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) in a statement announcing California's application for the funds.

"Furthermore, California's plan was approved by the Federal Railroad Administration in July 2008, giving California an even greater advantage in the competitive process for Federal Stimulus funding. High-speed rail will create immediate jobs for California workers, and stimulate long term economic growth in California."

If you have a vague memory of voting for - or against - the high speed rail act, that's probably because you were caught up in the fever of the 2008 presidential election. It all happened on the same day, folks - November 4, 2008. The rail act was approved by 52.6 percent of California voters, and it allows the state to issue \$9.95 billion in general obligation bonds for the project. That's only a fraction of its total cost, however - expected to be some \$40 billion for the whole 800-mile-or-so system.

The California High Speed Rail Authority has a budget of \$139 million for 2009-10.

Feeling lucky, it also approved grant applications for preliminary engineering and environmental work for six other corridors: Los Angeles to San Diego, Los Angeles to Palmdale, Palmdale to Bakersfield, Merced to San Jose, Sacramento to Merced, and the Altamont.

A bipartisan delegation of 20 California legislators went to Washington, D.C. last week to press federal officials for the funds.