



California lobbies for high-speed rail funds from federal government

May 6, 2009 4:00 PM

In Washington, it's always about money. California's Assembly Speaker and several colleagues traveled to Capitol Hill this week to talk about short-term loans – and about transportation dollars. KPCC's Washington Correspondent Kitty Felde says there could be good news for fans of high-speed rail.

Kitty Felde: This is the year Congress starts talking about how to spend the next big chunk of transportation dollars. California has a number of ideas about how to spend the money.

Several state lawmakers met this week with federal Transportation Secretary Roy LaHood to make their case. Assembly Speaker Karen Bass says she was pleasantly surprised to find the transportation secretary's a big fan of a high-speed rail project that would connect Sacramento to San Diego.

Karen Bass: I mean I knew California was ahead in terms of high-speed rail. But I didn't know that we were ahead of any other state in the union.

Felde: Last fall, California voters approved a \$10 billion bond to pay for the first phase of the \$40 billion project. Bass says no other state has put up that kind of money for high-speed rail projects.

But Congress will decide how to allocate transportation money. Bass says California may enjoy an advantage – Barbara Boxer heads the U.S. Senate committee that controls transportation dollars.