

# **Jerry Brown defends funding for bullet train**

**Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee, 1-10-14**

Calling his high-speed rail project consistent with California's history as "a generator of dreams and great initiatives," Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday defended his decision to shore up the project's shaky finances with money from the state's cap-and-trade fund.

"The alternative would be not to spend the money, and you do need that money, and we're going to spend it," Brown said. "No one's talking about the Marshall Plan or putting a man on the moon or the transcontinental railroad," he added.

Legal challenges have beset the project, throwing into question the fate of billions in voter-approved bond money. But the cap-and-trade money Brown proposes to use would not face any spending restrictions, according to a spokesman for the California State Transportation Agency.

With California's market for carbon-emissions permits generating hundreds of millions of dollars, Brown has proposed diverting some of the proceeds to high-speed rail. His budget calls for a combined \$300 million to be spent on high-speed rail and on the California Department of Transportation.

The plan has been buffeted from all sides. Environmentalists wonder if it is an appropriate use of money set aside to cut California's overall carbon emissions level, while critics of high-speed rail see Brown attempting to prop up an expensive boondoggle.

Brown called the move an effective way to reduce emissions by investing in transportation infrastructure, saying California's already overburdened roadways will not be able to accommodate projected population growth.

"The high-speed rail is a reducer of greenhouse gases, an enhancement of the quality of California life and a bringing together of our various" communities around the state, Brown said. Given expectations that the state's population will grow by millions of residents, he said, "we need alternatives."

A Sacramento Superior Court judge cast serious doubt on the \$68 billion bullet train's financial underpinnings in November, ordering the state to withdraw its original funding plan and declining to authorize an \$8 billion bond sale.

At the same time, Judge Michael P. Kenny did not halt the state's plan to spend \$3.4 billion in federal money on an initial segment in the Central Valley.

Opponents of high-speed rail have trumpeted the rulings as a decisive blow, while officials with the California Department of Transportation have said the project will proceed.