

PERRIS VALLEY LINE: \$75 million federal grant to be announced



/FILE PHOTO

Passengers disembark from a Metrolink train. Officials are expected to announce a federal grant that will help extend service from Riverside to Perris.

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BY DAVID DOWNEY | December 06, 2013; 05:33 PM

Transportation officials are poised to announce Monday, Dec. 9 the awarding of a \$75 million federal grant to the \$248 million Perris Valley Line, clearing the way for construction of the Metrolink commuter rail extension.

Brett Morrow, spokesman for Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, said Friday, Dec. 6, that federal officials will “finalize the grant” with a signing ceremony at the Perris Transit Station. Takano is scheduled to attend along with Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Corona, and Deputy Federal Transit Administrator Therese McMillan.

Transportation commissioners, who have been planning the project for years, said the grant will ensure there is enough money to build the Riverside-to-Perris rail line. It was the last thing holding up the project, said Lake Elsinore Mayor Bob Magee, who sits on the Riverside County Transportation Commission.

“This is the final piece of the funding puzzle,” Magee said. “And it will make it possible for us to be able to start construction (in) the next two to three weeks. We are that close.”

Commissioner and Perris Mayor Daryl Busch confirmed Monday’s announcement is about the grant award and said federal officials “are coming out to make it official.”

Busch said the money is crucial to the project’s success.

“There were times we were worried that we would lose that \$75 million,” Busch said, saying a



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The \$75 million will help pay for upgrades to 24 miles of track extending from Riverside, southeast to Moreno Valley and Perris along Interstate 215. Train stations are planned for the Hunter Park section of north Riverside, March Air Reserve Base near Moreno Valley, central Perris and south Perris just outside Menifee.

The line is projected to carry 4,000 passengers daily.

Magee said trains will take cars off the road, reduce air pollution and boost public transportation options. But getting to this point wasn't easy.

Shortly after the commission adopted an environmental impact report in summer 2011, a Riverside environmental group challenged the study in court. Then, in May, a Riverside judge tossed the report out.

Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, who also sits on the commission, said the ruling placed the federal grant in jeopardy.

"We had it all locked up. And then we had the lawsuit from Friends of Riverside's Hills," he said.

The ruling triggered negotiations between the group and commission. They reached a settlement in early July. A short time later the judge signed off on it, reinstating the environmental report -- and putting the grant back in play.

"We're tickled to death to receive it," Ashley said.

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