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House approves commuter rail for central Florida

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The state House of Representatives has approved a commuter rail project for the Orlando area.

TALLAHASSEE (Bay News 9) -- Central Florida's Commuter Rail project got approval from the House of Representatives Tuesday night.

The House voted 77-39 in favor of a massive Transportation Bill that includes the necessary authority and liability agreements with CSX to buy the 61-mile rail corridor from Debary to Poinciana.

"As a state, we either believe in mass transit or we don't. (It's)How we've been doing it for 20 years in South Florida. And if it's good enough for South Florida, it ought to be good enough for Central Florida. We either believe in Florida finally getting its fair share of federal transportation dollars. You know the reason we never get our fair share of federal transportation dollars is because we typically don't do projects to help draw them down, and this is one of them," said Rep. Dean Cannon from Winter Park.

Meanwhile, the Senate's version of the Transportation Bill is in rules limbo. A Commuter Rail opponent, Sen. Alex Villalobos, brought up a point of order just as senators began to discuss the bill. Sen. Villalobos called for it to be referred to another committee because it includes a provision for sovereign immunity. A decision by the Rules Committee is expected Wednesday morning.

There are still more than a dozen amendments pending, and the Senate has long been expected to be a tougher fight than the House.

The Orange County League of Women voters sent out an alert to members Tuesday, urging them to call or e-mail specific senators asking for their support for Commuter Rail.

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