

CALIFORNIA STATE RAIL PLAN



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the California State Rail Plan?

The California State Rail Plan establishes a statewide vision, sets priorities, and develops implementation strategies to enhance passenger and freight rail service in the public interest. It will serve as a basis for federal and state rail investments within the state for high-speed and conventional intercity passenger rail. The vision, priorities, and implementation strategies will support the State's goals of an integrated multimodal transportation network consisting of highway, freight, rail, transit, and aviation systems. This will be the first planning document that fully integrates the planned California High-Speed Rail system with the existing and proposed conventional rail network.

How does this relate to the California Interregional Blueprint?

The California State Rail Plan will complement and be prepared in parallel with the California Interregional Blueprint. The California Interregional Blueprint is a larger, more comprehensive planning effort to articulate the State's vision for an integrated multimodal interregional transportation system, one that reflects land use and transportation plans developed at the local level. The California Interregional Blueprint will be a foundation for the California Transportation Plan 2040, which is required by federal and state law. Release of the draft California State Rail Plan is scheduled for early 2013, just after the release of the California Interregional Blueprint Interim Report in December 2012. Responses to public comments will be included in the final State Rail Plan which will be issued in mid 2013.

What are the legal requirements of the California State Rail Plan?

California Government Code Section 14036 requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to prepare a 10-year rail planning document, for both passenger and freight rail, and to update it every two years. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 is a federal law requiring state rail plans to be developed and updated every five years in order to be eligible for federal passenger rail funding. The Act requires state rail plans to be more comprehensive and to include high-speed rail, ridership and capacity modeling, corridor improvement plans, as well as projects funded by the Federal Railroad Administration.

The California Interregional Blueprint will position Caltrans to respond to legislative requirements of Senate Bill 391. This bill requires that the California Transportation Plan meet the State's climate change goals under Assembly Bill 32 and Senate Bill 375. Key strategies for achieving maximum feasible emissions reduction to attain California's greenhouse gas goals include the construction of high-speed rail and expansion of public transit, commuter rail, and intercity rail systems. Thus, the California State Rail Plan will be developed with the express intent of creating a direct link with California Transportation Plan 2040 to address how the State's future rail system will meet the requirements of Senate Bill 391 and provide an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions for the existing and future systems.



Why is the California State Rail Plan important at this time and what outcomes will it produce?

California's rapid population growth continues to put pressure on the State's aging infrastructure. To meet the challenges of this growth and avoid the negative ramifications, the California State Rail Plan will help define a more sustainable transportation system for the future. The California State Rail Plan will identify rail transportation alternatives that can provide relief to highway and air transportation congestion. Rail ridership in California has increased by 43.3 percent from 2001 to 2007, which is even more impressive when compared to the State's population growth (8.6 percent). Maintenance and expansion of California's rail system will have a positive effect on the future mobility and environmental quality of the state. It is envisioned that greater use of the rail system will take millions of cars and trucks off the road that would otherwise be additional contributors to air pollution. Ridership numbers continue to grow each year and greater use of rail will contribute to improved air quality by reducing vehicle miles traveled and vehicle emissions. It will also reduce fuel consumption and can reduce the need for highway construction.

What is the schedule?

Preparation of the California State Rail Plan began in June 2011. A draft of the State Rail Plan will be available to the public for review in early 2013. Responses to public comments will be included in the final California State Rail Plan which will be issued in mid 2013.

Who is developing the California State Rail Plan?

Caltrans Division of Rail is the lead agency preparing the California State Rail Plan, and successfully attracted federal funding for rail planning studies in a highly competitive grant process. Caltrans has entered into a consultant contract with AECOM and Cambridge Systematics to help develop the California State Rail Plan, as well as Service Development Plans for the San Joaquin, Pacific Surfliner North, Pacific Surfliner South, and Coast Daylight Amtrak train routes.

What are the California State Rail Plan objectives?

The objectives of the California State Rail Plan are to:

- Support the State's goal of an integrated, multimodal transportation system;
- Provide rail transportation alternatives to other travel modes;
- Provide relief to highway and air travel congestion;
- Improve air quality, conserve fuel, and contribute to efficient and environmentally superior land use;
- Integrate the planned California High-Speed Rail system with existing and proposed conventional train systems;
- Prepare Service Development Plans for the San Joaquin, Pacific Surfliner North, Pacific Surfliner South, and Coast Daylight Amtrak routes; and
- Consider freight rail needs and benefits as part of the State's investments in rail facilities.

What are the major components of the California State Rail Plan?

The California State Rail Plan will contain the following major components:

- Establish the overall vision for the state rail system
- Describe how different rail components (those managed by Caltrans and those managed by other entities) will work together to deliver a comprehensive set of rail services that are well integrated in the State's multimodal transportation system;
- Provide a current system inventory identifying needs and deficiencies;
- Identify improvements and a detailed investment strategy;
- Assess funding options;
- Describe how these improvements would support and reflect other state, regional and local planning activities throughout California.





How can stakeholders participate in this process?

Federal, state, and regional agencies, as well as freight and commuter rail agencies have been invited to participate in the California State Rail Plan Advisory Committee to ensure that a broad and diverse group of stakeholders are represented. Interested parties and individuals also can participate in the process through the public meetings beginning in early 2013.

What are the expectations for participation in the California State Rail Plan Advisory Committee?

The Advisory Committee was initiated by the Caltrans Division of Rail in 2012 to provide input and expertise in the development of the California State Rail Plan and individual Service Development Plans. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide Caltrans with technical information and policy guidance on all aspects of the plan, including the various types of rail service (e.g., intercity passenger rail, commuter rail, high-speed rail, and freight rail), policies, system operations, environmental considerations and funding strategies. The Advisory Committee membership consists of representatives from:

- Amtrak
- BNSF Railway Company
- California High-Speed Rail Authority
- California Short Line Rail Association
- California Transportation Commission
- Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
- Coast Rail Coordinating Council
- Federal Railroad Administration
- Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN) North and South
- San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee
- State of California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency
- Union Pacific Railroad



The Advisory Committee is not a formal voting body; however, all input and dialogue will be documented for Caltrans and the consultant team to consider. The Advisory Committee participants will be able to attend quarterly meetings to provide continuity and insight on the California State Rail Plan.

What are Service Development Plans?

Service Development Plans will formalize the State's short, medium, and long-term visions for the following Amtrak corridors: the San Joaquin, Pacific Surfliner North, Pacific Surfliner South, and Coast Daylight Route. These plans will take into consideration anticipated population growth, the need to address high-speed rail and intercity passenger rail as future transportation options, multimodal connectivity with other transportation modes, and funding availability to meet projected needs.

The Service Development Plan process includes identifying project alternatives for the four corridors through a public outreach process. Alternatives will be screened by evaluating the construction feasibility, service performance improvements, community benefits and impacts, and environmental benefits and impacts of each alternative. Implementation plans for each of the corridors will be developed, including timeframes of recommended projects based on the screening effort. The Service Development Plans will identify capital needs, proposed funding sources, and potential phasing of improvements.

The Capital Corridor and California High-Speed Rail systems each have their own plans that have been developed by the Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority and the California High-Speed Rail Authority respectively, which will be included in the State Rail Plan. The Service Development Plans and Business Plans are an integral part of the planning process and will provide criteria for corridor improvements and evaluation of intercity rail operational and capital improvements that are proposed in the California State Rail Plan.



How will the California State Rail Plan be implemented?

The California State Rail Plan will be used as a planning tool for improving the overall state rail system. It will provide a long-term strategy that will enable Caltrans, the California High-Speed Rail Authority, commuter rail operators, freight railroads, and communities to plan for the future. The State Rail Plan is intended to prioritize actions to facilitate the delivery of cost-effective rail services in California that promote climate stabilization, job access, environmental improvements, and improved mobility. Each of the rail operators would be responsible for implementing the improvements identified in the State Rail Plan based on demonstrated market demand, availability of capital and operating funding, and completion of related planned projects. In addition, these improvements may be subject to applicable environmental review and permitting prior to construction.

What is a “blended system”?

Plans are in the works to integrate or “blend” the California High-Speed Rail system with existing intercity and regional commuter rail systems via coordinated infrastructure, schedules, ticketing, and other means. With this blended approach, early improvements can be made to existing train systems like Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), State supported intercity rail service, Caltrain and Metrolink, while at the same time building the foundation for future California High-Speed Rail service. Passengers will benefit from early investments in these existing train systems, which will eventually provide important feeder service to the statewide California High-Speed Rail system once it starts operating.

What kinds of early improvements are envisioned? The California High-Speed Rail Authority will fund early improvements to the “bookends” of the California High-Speed Rail system in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles Basin. These improvements would consist of upgrading existing rail systems, such as electrification of the Caltrain corridor on the San Francisco peninsula and upgrades to Metrolink in the Los Angeles/Anaheim area. Improving the reliability, safety, and efficiency of these rail systems would benefit current riders and attract new ridership.

Construction of the initial operating section of High-Speed Rail is planned to be completed in 2018. This initial section of tracks will be put to use immediately upon completion and deliver early benefits by allowing the existing San Joaquin route to operate on the new tracks until the initiation of full High-Speed Rail service. With creation of the “Northern California Unified Service,” the San Joaquin route, ACE, and Capitol Corridor trains will be enhanced and operated in a more integrated manner, creating an improved network reaching from Bakersfield to the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority’s plan would connect the major metropolitan areas of Northern and Southern California by leveraging existing systems and tying them together with a high-speed rail backbone in the Central Valley. Phase 1 of the High-Speed Rail system would connect San Francisco, the Central Valley, and Los Angeles/Anaheim through a combination of dedicated high-speed rail

infrastructure blended with existing urban train systems. Ultimately, with Phase 2 expansion, California High-Speed Rail is planned to extend all the way from Sacramento to San Diego.

The California State Rail Plan lays out the vision, strategies and investments for California’s rail system, which is based upon the future High-Speed Rail system. With connections at all new high-speed train stations to existing regional and local transit systems, High-Speed Rail will significantly enhance the passenger transportation across the state.



When can I provide input?

Public meetings on the California State Rail Plan will be held beginning in early 2013. The project website www.californiastaterailplan.com will be updated with the latest project information as it is developed. There you can join the project e-mail list to receive future notifications and updates. Requests to join the project mailing list, questions, and input can also be directed by email to:

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