

# **CALIFORNIA STATE RAIL PLAN**

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CALIFORNIA STATE RAIL PLAN

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## Executive Summary

In 2008, the United States Congress enacted the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), which aimed to strengthen the national rail network through a long-term view of the rail system. PRIIA also underscored the benefits of integrating rail into the statewide transportation planning process. States must develop state rail plans meeting federal requirements to be eligible for federal funding for high-speed and intercity passenger rail programs. States are also encouraged to develop strategies and policies for enhanced passenger and freight rail services that benefit the public.

The 2013 *California State Rail Plan* (CSRP) meets these federal intentions and requirements. It also establishes a statewide vision, sets priorities, and develops implementation strategies to enhance passenger and freight rail service in the public interest. The CSRP fulfills federal and state requirements for state rail plans, fully integrating plans for the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and complying with rail planning provisions of 49 United States Code Section 22102. It also supports the State's goal of developing an integrated, multimodal transportation network. Finally, the CSRP will guide federal and state rail investments in California. These investments will enhance people and goods movement while enhancing economic growth and quality of life.

The CSRP has 10 chapters, as follows:

1. Introduction;
2. California Rail Transportation Context and Challenges;
3. Rail Vision Statement;
4. Public Outreach and Approval Process;
5. Existing Passenger Rail System;
6. Existing Freight Rail System;
7. Passenger and Freight Rail Integration;
8. Passenger Rail Improvements;
9. Freight Rail Improvements; and
10. Passenger and Freight Rail System Integration.

## Introduction

California's rail system performance over the past decade underscores the system's importance to the State. Passenger rail ridership has risen 55 percent during that period, and the freight rail network has shown continued vitality. There are opportunities for rail to move forward with the advent of a statewide high-speed rail (HSR) system.

Passenger and freight rail are positioned to help address environmental and economic development challenges such as traffic congestion, reduced mobility, and air quality. However, additional funding for capital investments, ongoing operations, and maintenance is needed to meet these challenges. Plans for expanding passenger rail into "blended" services—which leverage state and federal investments in high-speed rail—will require tightly coordinated and integrated planning, programming, and execution by multiple agencies.

California's rail system also faces longer-term challenges. Rail networks face increasing freight and passenger demand, often on freight-owned rail infrastructure. Additionally, multiple passenger rail operators (high-speed, intercity, and commuter) must respond to traveler expectations of seamless rail service operations, safety, ticketing, and traveler information.

The 2013 CSRP provides a framework for growing California intercity rail system. It notes gains made over the past decade, addresses future needs and challenges to transportation, the environment, and economic well-being, and details plans for substantial expansion and integration of services.

## **CSRP Highlights**

The major findings and results of the CSRP are as follows:

- The 2013 CSRP is different from previous state rail plans because of changes in federal rail policy, funding, and requirements. The plan also complies with new California climate change legislation tying transportation to emission reduction goals. Finally, the CSRP integrates the 2012 Revised Business Plan (Business Plan) of CHSRA;
- The CSRP reiterates the importance of integrated planning between HSR, intercity and commuter rail operations, from both legal requirement and practical necessity. Future population and employment growth is intensifying in regions to be served by HSR and intercity passenger rail. Moreover, the State's freight rail network is valuable to California shippers and to the national rail network. Moving people and freight by rail offers demonstrated environmental benefits;
- The CSRP establishes a rail vision statement for the future:

*California has a premier, customer-focused rail system that successfully moves people and products while enhancing economic growth and quality of life;*

- The CSRP is being explained to state, regional and local agencies to receive their input and feedback. A variety of methods and channels will be employed to explain the CSRP and receive public input. The California Transportation Commission (CTC) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are reviewing early chapters and offering comments and suggestions in an ongoing process leading to approval of the CSRP by both entities;
- California has invested for years in growing high-capacity and high-performance intercity passenger rail services. These services attract high passenger volumes. Passenger rail institutional roles are likely to change as new legislatively-authorized joint powers authorities (JPA) are considered for the Pacific Surfliner and San Joaquin routes. These roles may also change as Caltrans and CHSRA become part of a new State Transportation Agency;
- California is a significant origin and destination for freight rail traffic, given its market size and its position in international trade flows. The expansion of the Panama Canal and other Pacific Coast port expansions are unlikely to change Pacific Rim trade that moves on California freight railroads. Regional planning studies have identified a series of projects that can resolve freight chokepoints and bottlenecks;
- Major conflicts in several rail corridors will require careful coordination among multiple passenger and freight users. These corridors include Stockton to Sacramento (an important freight corridor with growing services of the Northern California Unified Service), Los Angeles to Colton and Los Angeles to Riverside (heavy freight traffic and high commuter rail frequencies), and Los Angeles to Burbank (high commuter train counts and plans for Pacific Surfliner and Coast Daylight expansion);

- The CSRP describes planned expansion of state-supported routes by 2020 when the HSR blended system is anticipated to be in service, as follows:
  - *Pacific Surfliner*: one more daily roundtrip from San Diego to Los Angeles for a total of 12; one more roundtrip from Los Angeles to Goleta for a total of six, and a total of two roundtrips from Goleta to San Luis Obispo;
  - *San Joaquin*: seven to 11 daily roundtrips on the Initial Construction Section (ICS) and three to six roundtrips on the BNSF line; and
  - *Capitol Corridor*: one additional weekday roundtrip from Sacramento to Oakland for a total of 16, and four additional weekday roundtrips from San Jose to Oakland for a total of 11;
  - The CSRP also describes the planned system in 2025 when initial HSR operations are planned to be in effect. 34 round trips on the initial HSR segment from Merced to the San Fernando Valley are planned.
- The CSRP stresses the importance of large annual expenditures by Class I freight railroads on major maintenance, capacity expansion, locomotives, and rolling stock. The plan identifies currently planned projects among four types of freight improvements totaling \$15 billion; and
- The CSRP explains the following public benefits of the passenger rail improvements in the plan:
  - Statewide CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction of 35,000 tons per year in 2020 and 637,000 to 1,000,000 tons in 2025 from expanded intercity passenger rail system; and
  - Year 2025 user and non-user economic benefits of \$3.16 billion to \$4.11 billion from expanded intercity passenger rail system.

## CSRP Chapter Summaries

**Chapter 1: Introduction.** Chapter 1 explains what the 2013 CSRP will accomplish and why the plan is different from other rail plans. It also details how the CSRP meets federal and state legal requirements for state rail plans, and describes CSRP chapter contents. The Chapter explains how the 2013 CSRP is different from previous state rail plans due to changes in federal rail policy, funding, and requirements, new California climate change legislation that ties transportation to emission reduction goals, and integration with the CHSRA Business Plan.

**Chapter 2: California Rail Transportation Context and Challenges.** The CSRP fits into the multimodal *California Interregional Blueprint (CIB)* and *California Transportation Plan (CTP)*. The CSRP also links to other transportation plans through climate change legislation like Senate Bill (SB) 375 (Steinberg 2008) and SB 391 (Liu 2009). Population and employment growth rates are increasing in regions served by passenger rail (intercity and HSR) and freight rail. This chapter describes rail transportation's environmental benefits and notes environmental review processes for rail projects. The chapter also details these rail system issues: demand factors for growth in passenger and freight traffic, needs for seamless passenger transportation connections, necessity of integrated planning for HSR, and intercity and commuter rail operations. Chapter 2 also reiterates the importance of integrated planning between HSR, intercity and commuter rail operations, both from a legal standpoint and out of practical necessity.

**Chapter 3: State Rail Plan Vision Statement.** *California has a premier, customer-focused rail system that successfully moves people and products while enhancing economic growth and quality of life.* The passenger rail system creates an integrated network with state of the art, customer-focused services that enhance quality of life. The freight rail system connects industries and shippers to national and international markets, co-exists with growing passenger rail services, and also improves quality of life. Chapter 3 also describes how the CSRP vision fits into the CTP vision, goals and objectives.

**Chapter 4: Public Outreach and Approval Process.** This chapter details the Public Involvement and Stakeholder Outreach Plan (PISOP) goals and objectives, and support tasks such as stakeholder databases, web site development, branding, and creation of collateral materials. The PISOP establishes a series of meetings and coordination with the CSRP Advisory Committee, other state agencies, and public meetings associated with the February 2013 Draft CSRP release. The chapter outlines this activity, summarizes comments received and their incorporation into the CSRP, and explains the approval process by the CTC and FRA. It also details how state, regional and local agencies are providing their input and feedback on the CSRP. Finally, it explains the ongoing review and approval process for the CSRP by the CTC and FRA.

**Chapter 5: Existing Passenger Rail System.** Chapter 5 includes a detailed description of state-supported intercity routes: *Pacific Surfliner*, *San Joaquin* and *Capitol Corridor*. It also contains details on Amtrak long-distance trains and commuter rail services in the State, describes the California High-Speed Rail project including the Blended Service concept, and explains the State's urban rail systems and their connectivity to intercity and commuter rail. Exhibit ES.1 shows the state-supported and Amtrak long distance intercity passenger rail routes in California. The chapter discusses passenger rail connectivity, rail station configurations, and operational aspects, and includes performance data for state-supported and long-distance routes. Additionally, Chapter 5 explains institutional roles and relationships among owners/operators of passenger rail and other regulatory agencies, and details safety and security agencies and issues.

**Chapter 6: Existing Freight Rail System.** This chapter includes a description and inventory of California's freight railroad system, shown in Exhibit ES.2. For Class I and short lines, this includes details on the system, its capabilities, and its functions. The chapter offers details on types of commodities moved on the current and future freight rail network, current and future. The chapter describes freight rail trends, emphasizing the unique function of California's freight rail network: international trade flows, logistics change, and Positive Train Control (PTC) requirements.

**Chapter 7: Passenger and Freight Rail Integration.** This chapter combines freight and passenger train counts on shared tracks and shared ROW, both current and projected, identifies corridors with high train volumes and challenges for ongoing shared conditions, and identifies strategies and mitigation for growing corridor use by multiple users. Major conflicts in several rail corridors will require careful coordination among multiple passenger and freight users. These corridors include Stockton to Sacramento (an important freight corridor with growing services of the Northern California Unified Service), Los Angeles to Colton and Los Angeles to Riverside (heavy freight traffic and high commuter rail frequencies), and Los Angeles to Burbank (high commuter train counts and plans for *Pacific Surfliner* and *Coast Daylight* expansion).



**Exhibit ES.1: California Intercity Passenger Rail Routes**

Source: California Department of Transportation, 2012.



**Exhibit ES.2: California Class I Rail System, 2012**

Source: Caltrans Division of Rail (DOR) Rail Network.

**Chapter 8: Passenger Rail Improvements.** This chapter includes segment listings for the new California HSR system illustrated in Exhibit ES.3. It also details project listings for improvements to *Pacific Surfliner*, *San Joaquin* and *Capitol Corridor* routes. The chapter describes proposed new services and criteria for evaluation for *Coast Daylight* and *Coachella Valley* (including project listings), as well as proposed extensions of current services. Finally, Chapter 8 includes descriptions of new high-speed rail on *XpressWest*, new commuter rail, and extensions of commuter rail service.

**Chapter 9: Freight Rail Improvements.** Chapter 9 outlines four kinds of freight improvements: trade corridors, local rail, community impact mitigation, and economic development. The chapter describes new projects and programs for freight investments, policy issues and best practices for consideration, and lists freight rail-related highway-rail grade separations. It also stresses the importance of large annual expenditures by Class I freight railroads on major maintenance, capacity expansion, locomotives, and rolling stock. Chapter 9 identifies currently planned projects totaling \$15 billion.

**Chapter 10: Passenger and Freight Rail System Integration.** Chapter 10 includes details on phasing for HSR implementation. Additionally, the chapter discusses past and current rail funding programs at federal and state levels. It also quantifies ridership projections and resulting GHG and economic effects, overall environmental effects of the CSRP, and the importance of rail corridor preservation.

There are several key steps needed to support near-term and long-term plan implementation. These steps include the following:

- Secure funding and access agreements for the additional trains that are needed in state-supported intercity passenger rail routes to meet the State's economic and environmental objectives;
- Demonstrate California's HSR commitment to successfully constructing and operating the Initial Operating Section (IOS) through the San Joaquin Valley;
- Finalize details of Northern California Unified Service plans, projects, and operating plans, including environmental clearance of the overall operating plans, as the IOS is constructed;
- Procure, test, and operate new intercity passenger rail equipment recently ordered by the State. These actions lay the foundation for the funding and procurement of more equipment needed for electrified and high-speed operations; and
- The California State Legislature recently authorized JPAs for administering and planning the Pacific Surfliner and San Joaquin routes. The California State Legislature also approved reorganization of the State's transportation agencies, including Caltrans and CHSRA, under a new Transportation Agency. These institutional changes will be implemented concurrently with the ongoing increase in the pace and complication of passenger rail planning in California.



**Exhibit ES.3: California High-Speed Rail Initial Operating Section and Phased Implementation**

Source: California High-Speed Rail Authority, October 2012.