

STATE RAIL ANNUAL REPORT

2025



RAIL PLAN
California State
Rail Plan

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Message from the Division Chief

MESSAGE FROM THE DIVISION CHIEF

Caltrans is pleased to share the first annual progress report update of the 2024 State Rail Plan. Every four years, the State Rail Plan provides an updated, long-range vision for rail in California. This annual update provides stakeholders with a look into the continual progress made in achieving the State's long-term vision.

For passenger rail in California, 2025 was another year of recovery and improvement from the pandemic-induced ridership changes that occurred in 2020. Intercity and commuter rail services continued to adapt to new travel patterns and ridership continued to trend back towards pre-pandemic levels. All three intercity rail corridors returned to full pre-pandemic service levels by January 2026.

After launching its revolutionary electrified service in late 2024, Caltrain's ridership increased dramatically in 2025; this has shown that frequent, reliable, all-day service can create attractive mobility options for all types of trips and travelers. Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) continued its march toward completion of the entire corridor by extending service to Windsor—all while continually setting new ridership records for the growing service. In Southern California, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) and Metrolink launched its ground-breaking hydrogen fuel cell-powered, zero-emissions service between San Bernardino and

Redlands. Across the state, construction projects advanced and new trains took shape on production lines, heralding more growth to come. Further, the reauthorization of the Cap-and-Invest program through 2045 ensures a robust and stable source of funding to continue advancing California's highest priority rail projects and continue delivering on the vision in the State Rail Plan.

Caltrans and its partners advanced five routes toward the planning phase of the Corridor Identification and Development Program. Soon, Corridor Identification and Development Program Service Development Plans will translate the State Rail Plan into near- and mid-term capital improvements and identify funding to build them. Tied with the new California Rail Infrastructure System (CRIS) tool, rail planners across the state will have a uniform tool for tracking planning and project status, tying plans to funding and project completion.

Rail continues to play a vital role in California's ambitious climate, mobility, and equity goals. Caltrans looks forward to providing an annual report on progress toward the statewide vision.

Kyle Gradinger

Division Chief

California Department of Transportation



Purpose

PURPOSE

Caltrans is providing an update on the actions and initiatives advanced since the release of the 2024 California State Rail Plan (CSRP). As Caltrans begins developing the next CSRP—expected to take on a new digital format—this document offers insight into short-term planning efforts and developments across California's rail network.

The 2024 CSRP set a long-range vision for investment and improved mobility on the passenger rail network for the next 25 years and beyond. California's rail network is well positioned to serve regional trips over 10 miles and longer-distance trips over 50 miles, which together account for 75% of statewide auto-travel mileage. The Plan envisions that by 2050, Californians will travel nearly 200 million daily passenger miles on an integrated, zero-emission rail and transit system that connects every region and provides a meaningful

alternative to car ownership. Without a high-performance rail and transit system, California will not be able to achieve its ambitious, yet necessary, climate and equity goals.

This Annual Report is divided into four major sections. The first identifies the major projects and programs that the State and its rail partners delivered and explores how they support the State Rail Plan's goals for California's rail network. The second section provides updates on the existing state-funded intercity passenger rail services, on topics such as ridership, service, and capital improvements. The third section focuses on the strategic planning development approach that Caltrans uses to expand infrastructure and service. The closing section describes Caltrans' funding strategy for rail programs in California, including state and federal funding sources available to agencies and collaborators.



Caltrain at Diridon Station.



STATE PROGRAM DELIVERY

Caltrans is committed to delivering the statewide program for a high-performance, greener, and more equitable rail network.

Caltrans works with partner agencies to facilitate coordinated planning and project development to advance the delivery of a connected statewide rail network. Since 2015, Caltrans has been developing a statewide "Service-Led Planning Methodology," identifying the processes and technical resources required to support the methodology—and iterating refinement in practice with partner agencies. Service planning is primarily concerned with provision of the service itself: what markets are served, how frequent that service is, what connections are provided, how much capacity is offered, and what trip times can be delivered. It also creates a reproducible process that enhances transparency and facilitates collaboration between agencies planning in multijurisdictional corridors and regions. Open channels of communication allow all stakeholders to operate from a unified position and for Caltrans to validate and verify a rigorous process for developing capital projects as they pursue State and Federal funding.

CALTRAIN ELECTRIFICATION

Caltrain introduced electrified service between San Francisco and San Jose in September, 2024. All stations now receive more frequent and faster service because the electrified trains have faster acceleration and deceleration times.

Over 2025, Caltrain became California's strongest example of a passenger rail service reaching, and then exceeding, pre-pandemic ridership. Since starting service in late 2024, post-electrification ridership increased 57% year over year with weekend ridership reaching 136%—the highest weekend ridership in Caltrain's history. Caltrain returns approximately 23% of the clean electricity it uses back to the grid and will in the future be able to earn net energy chargebacks of approximately \$1,000,000 per year. The electrification effort aims to support both regional and state climate action goals around lowered greenhouse gas emissions, air quality improvements, and reduced traffic congestion. Additionally, electrified service will reduce localized noise and air pollution and improve access and service for equity priority communities along the corridor. Full electrified service on Caltrain marks the completion of the 51-mile Peninsula Corridor Electrification Program. Electrification makes Caltrain highly competitive with car travel and prepares the corridor for the introduction of high-speed rail, which will change the dynamics of the state's rail network.





San Bernardino County Transportation Authority Zero Emission Multiple Unit

OFF-WIRE ZERO-EMISSION IMPLEMENTATION

SBCTA received its first Zero Emission Multiple Unit (ZEMU) in June 2024 for use on Metrolink's service between San Bernardino and Redlands. The vehicle, which uses hydrogen fuel cells and batteries, is North America's first zero-emission passenger train to operate on a non-electrified route. Static testing and field testing of the units began in late 2024 and revenue service commenced on September 13, 2025.

SBCTA's ZEMU marks an important milestone toward the State's goals of decarbonizing the rail fleet and making all passenger rail vehicles zero-emission by 2050. Battery-electric and hydrogen technologies will extend zero-emission rail service where

catenary electrification is not feasible or not yet operational.

Caltrain, with its existing 51 electrified miles of track between San Francisco and San Jose, continues to progress towards delivery of the first bi-level Battery Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU) in the United States. This train will enable off-wire zero emission service in the un-electrified 30 miles of the Caltrain service between San Jose and Gilroy.



SMART EXTENSION TO WINDSOR

SMART service continues to expand, adding a new extension to Windsor on May 31, 2025. The State's near-term capital program, which carries approximately \$18.9 billion of statewide infrastructure investments, helped fund the extension. Near-term work continues to extend service north to Healdsburg, with groundbreaking scheduled for Spring 2026. In the medium-term, SMART will extend to Cloverdale, supporting improved bus connections to the North Coast. Total annual ridership on SMART has

grown year after year since Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. FY 2025 ridership is almost 57% greater than FY 2019—the highest pre-pandemic ridership figure. Since the opening of the Windsor extension, total monthly ridership and average weekday ridership reached a system high.

SMART and Caltrans collaborate to meet state goals. Projects, such as the Windsor extension, provide passenger rail transportation options that support additional housing options, mode shift from driving to rail and transit, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase economic development.



Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit service. Photo by Tom Rennie, courtesy of SMART.

INTERCITY PASSENGER SERVICE UPDATE



The Capitol Corridor Crosses Alameda Creek at the mouth of Niles Canyon

Caltrans supports the three State-supported intercity passenger rail services:

- **Capitol Corridor**, managed by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (JPA) since 1998.
- **Gold Runner** (formerly San Joaquins), managed by the San Joaquin JPA since 2015.
- **Pacific Surfliner**, managed by the Los Angeles - San Diego - San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN Agency) JPA since 2015.

While ridership peaked at 5.6 million in 2019 before declining during the pandemic, the primary focus today is on resilience:

rebuilding ridership, restoring service, and addressing operational challenges tied to aging infrastructure, equipment, changes in travel patterns, and climate-related impacts.

These challenges require both near-term actions and long-term investments to provide reliable, sustainable service and advance the State's goal of an integrated, high-performance rail network. Caltrans continues to work closely with local and regional partners to navigate these challenges and strengthen the intercity program.





A deserted platform at the Merced Station.

RIDERSHIP RECOVERY

Pre-pandemic ridership for all three corridors has been climbing back following different recovery paths. The following ridership recovery numbers were achieved with a limited schedule and fewer trains than pre-pandemic schedules which saw peak ridership numbers:

By the close of FY 2024–25:

- Gold Runner reached 78 percent of its pre-pandemic ridership.

- The Pacific Surfliner reached 67 percent of its pre-pandemic ridership.
- The Capitol Corridor reached 62 percent of its pre-pandemic ridership.

These figures reflect performance through the end of the last complete fiscal year. More recent data presented publicly by the Joint Powers Authorities indicates that ridership continues to improve beyond FY 2024–25, with some corridors demonstrating particularly strong recent performance.



Figure 1: Ridership Recovery Trends by Corridor

Percentage indicates ridership as percentage of pre-pandemic high.

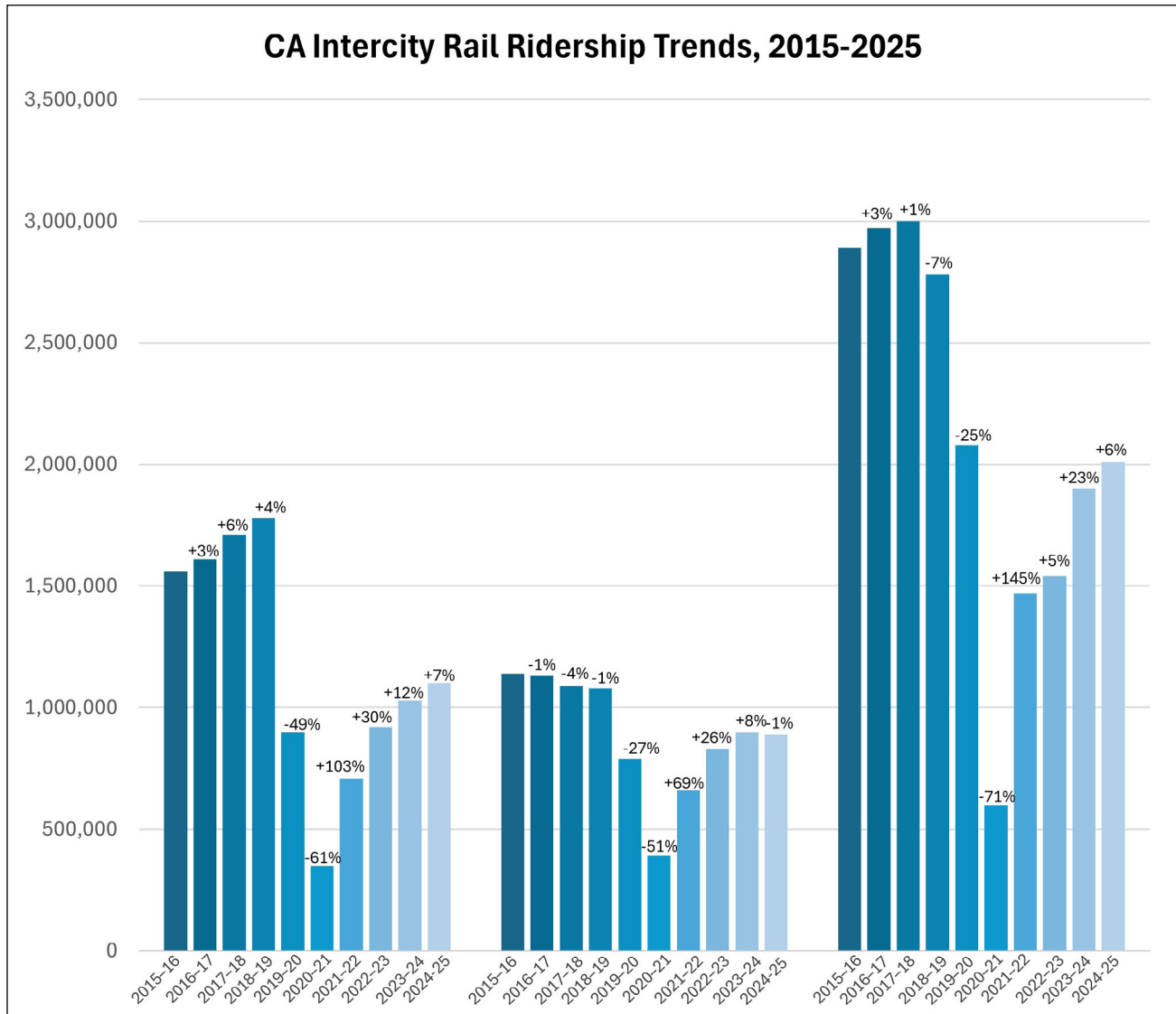


Figure 1: The preceding statistics are as of June 30, 2025, and do not include increases in the number of trains operating on each corridor that have been realized since then. Ridership numbers are rounded to the nearest 1000 riders.



Passengers board the Gold Runner (formerly San Joaquins) train at Bakersfield. Editorial Credit: Richard Thornton / Shutterstock.com

SERVICE INCREASES

On December 8, 2025, **Capitol Corridor** and **Gold Runner** service increased to pre-pandemic levels:

- 15 weekday and 11 weekend round trips on Capitol Corridor, and
- 7 daily round trips (with five between Bakersfield and Oakland and two between Bakersfield and Sacramento) on Gold Runner.

In September 2025 and extending into 2026, equipment availability issues have created the need to institute a number of temporary scheduled service reductions for Capitol Corridor and Gold Runner services.

As of January 26, 2026, **Pacific Surfliner** resumed its pre-pandemic service levels with 13 daily round trips between Los Angeles and San Diego. Pacific Surfliner will also pilot an additional round trip north of Los Angeles, totaling six daily round trips between Los Angeles and Goleta, and three round trips operating between Goleta and San Luis Obispo.

This return to full-service levels in 2025 and 2026 is expected to increase ridership.





Railroad tracks along the Orange Subdivision in Orange County near San Clemente.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR COASTAL RESILIENCY EFFORTS

Coastal portions of California's rail network remain a key constraint in the intercity passenger rail program due to capacity, right-of-way, coastal erosion, and the risk of inundation from rising sea-level and high tides. In 2025, maintenance efforts along the LOSSAN corridor near San Diego and San Clemente focused on infrastructure improvements to strengthen network resilience, funded with hundreds of millions in funding from State sources. Between April 28 and June 7, 2025, passenger service

through San Clemente was paused to allow crews to safely conduct emergency work to reinforce sections of track at immediate risk from landslides and coastal erosion. Other portions of the coastal rail network continue to be studied, including at-risk sections of coastal track, which are the subject of long-term state initiatives to study relocation of California's essential rail services to more defensible locations.

FLEET AVAILABILITY

Reduced fleet availability in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era has impacted post-pandemic service across the JPAs.



Intercity Passenger Service Update

Caltrans, the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, and LOSSAN have worked together on re-deployment of the legacy bi-level California Cars and Comet Cars as the Siemens Venture equipment is being commissioned on the Gold Runner route. The seventh and final trainset in this procurement is planned for revenue service in 2026. These additional coaches will be used to increase availability of legacy railcars service across California.

Caltrans is also leasing additional rolling-stock from Caltrain's surplus fleet to supplement fleet deployment on the Capitol Corridor route.

Caltrans is procuring hydrogen fuel cell and battery hybrid trainsets from Stadler. Each trainset will consist of four cars, will seat over 200 passengers, and will be capable of operating together with a second trainset to

provide over 400 seats per train. Delivery of the first trainsets is scheduled for 2027–2028, followed by testing and certification in 2028 and 2029.

In addition to procuring additional vehicles, Caltrans is initiating the second mid-life overhaul for the EMD F59 locomotives that have been the backbone of California's intercity services since as early as 1994. Caltrans is also planning for the first mid-life overhaul of the Siemens Charger locomotives that started entering service in 2017.

A mid-life overhaul consists of replacing or refurbishing major locomotive systems to restore the locomotive to like-new operating condition so that it can continue to provide reliable and high-quality service to Caltrans's passenger rail system. The F59PHI overhaul will keep those locomotives in service for up to 15 years.



A Pacific Surfliner with a mixed consist approaches the 6th Street Bridge. Editorial Credit: Chizhevskaya Ekaterina / Shutterstock.com

STRATEGIC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

Caltrans is committed to a strategic approach to rail planning that emphasizes targeted investments, scalable analysis, and strong coordination across agencies and jurisdictions. With California's rail network spanning multiple operators, host railroads, and funding partners, clear processes and shared parameters are essential for effective decision-making. In 2025, Caltrans advanced several initiatives that strengthen this framework, including developing tools to improve capital project tracking and coordination, and participation in federal programs that help build a robust capital pipeline. With major efforts already underway, these initiatives support a more integrated, efficient, and well-planned statewide rail network.

CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CID) PROGRAM

The CID Program is a federal funding opportunity to advance State Rail Plan implementation by establishing an intercity passenger rail planning and project development program that will set forth a capital project pipeline ready for sustained federal funding. For many decades, the State has been the primary funding source for intercity rail investment in California. This joint, federal-state partnership for planning and project delivery will help the intercity passenger rail operators and partners develop and deliver projects in alignment with the methodologies and policy goals outlined in the State Rail Plan.

Caltrans is the sponsor of five CID intercity rail corridors throughout California and will lead the development of Service Development Plans (SDPs) for each corridor meeting criteria of the program.



Figure 2: Caltrans CID Program Map



| CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STEPS | | |
|---|----------|--|
| PROGRAM STEP | STATUS | DESCRIPTION |
| Scoping and Program Initiation | Complete | The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will grant up to \$500,000, with no state or local match required, for the sponsor to develop a scope, schedule, and budget for a Service Development Plan (SDP) and create staff capacity to undertake the service planning effort. Caltrans opted to fund and complete this step using staff resources |
| Service Development Plan (SDP) | 2026 | Caltrans, as the sponsor, will collaborate with the FRA and lead partners to develop an SDP in accordance with the approved scope of work. The FRA funds step 2 at 90% and Caltrans will provide the 10% local match for all five corridors. An SDP is a multi-year planning effort to establish the service concept and necessary capital projects to operate that service. |
| Preliminary Engineering and NEPA | Future | Once FRA accepts the SDP, the FRA will determine which identified priority projects meet the readiness criteria to advance to Step 3 of CID. Then, Caltrans, as the sponsor, will coordinate with FRA and the lead partners to complete preliminary engineering and federal environmental review for the selected capital projects. The FRA will provide 80% funding for Step 3. |

FROM TIME HORIZONS TO NETWORK STATES

The Rail Plan will shift away from traditional time-horizon planning (near-term, mid-term, long-term) and instead adopt a Network State framework. In this approach, each Network State corresponds to a clearly defined service goal, key service outcomes, and progress toward that goal is driven by the completion of the projects and activities required to operate that level of service, including, but not limited to, delivering capital projects, securing operating and maintenance funding, and finalizing relevant agreements. Network States link service expansion directly to actual project delivery. This approach creates a flexible structure that ties project delivery to service outcomes instead of a specific planning horizon. This is not meant as a retreat from accountability, rather a realistic approach to advancing projects and focusing on outcomes. As each project advances through project development and delivery, there will still be specific timelines for completion for effective project management.

Once the required projects and activities for a given service goal are completed,

that Network State is considered achieved, unlocking the ability to implement the associated service and advance to the next state. This transition provides an implementation-oriented approach that drives service outcomes resulting in a network that will evolve to reflect what is needed to enable each step of growth.

RAIL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

California's rail capital program is funded through multiple sources managed by multiple stakeholders. The Rail Plan provides a framework for determining priorities within corridors and across the state to better align with funding sources. Caltrans worked with local and regional partners to align funding strategies to support service-led strategic planning in the 2018 and 2024 State Rail Plans, but there are opportunities to refine the process and better focus the strategy to deliver top priority projects.

The first step to improving the statewide rail investment strategy is to have more accurate information and clearer organization of the data for the existing suite of capital projects. The Division of Rail is working with rail partners to collect project information



Strategic Planning Development

and will validate existing projects and new project concepts, utilizing the Caltrans Rail Infrastructure System (CRIS) capital projects database, to ensure appropriate technical documentation and alignment with State Rail Plan goals. The CRIS is a collaborative workspace and project library that captures up-to-date project information and allows the Division of Rail to better monitor and manage the rail capital program.

The second step to improving the rail investment strategy is to evaluate priority projects and project advancements that have completed rigorous planning and project development, support corridor service goals, and have reasonable commitments of support from key partners such as funding partners and host railroads. Caltrans is working with partners to refine strategic investment guidance and will deploy that alongside utilization of CRIS later this year.

CALTRANS RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM (CRIS) DIGITAL TOOLS AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

CRIS is a centralized location for information about California's rail capital projects, providing a shared, collaborative workspace that keeps project information accurate, accessible, and aligned. Designed to support project delivery of the 2024 California State Rail Plan and major investment programs, CRIS links key project elements including technical documents, funding, timelines, agreements, and proposed track layouts. CRIS includes an infrastructure database alongside the capital project information which helps visualize all current and future planning scenarios through track schematics, giving a unified picture of corridor needs and opportunities. Together, these tools enhance Caltrans' ability to advance and monitor the full project delivery process—from

early concept through design, funding, and implementation—by enabling real-time updates, streamlining communication, and reducing reliance on manual tracking or isolated email exchanges.

As new project information becomes available, CRIS serves as a single source of truth to facilitate collaboration between Caltrans and stakeholders, supports stronger funding applications, and provides decisionmakers with the milestones they need to move work forward. To maintain this unified, statewide view of rail investment progress, Caltrans is seeking ongoing stakeholder partnership to provide accurate, up-to-date project inputs and continued updates on the service planning goals and parameters for projects that support the CSRP vision.



Pacific Surfliner train travels south towards San Diego



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

HIGH-SPEED RAIL (HSR) PROJECT UPDATE

In August 2025, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) published its 2025 Supplemental Project Update Report following a reassessment of the state's high-speed rail program.

The reassessment focused on four key areas:

1. Completing design reviews to minimize costs
2. Making trade-off decisions for greater efficiency
3. Sequencing construction and making funding go further
4. Reviewing estimating methods for greater reliability

From the reassessment, the Authority developed several business cases, each with updated cost estimates, ridership and revenue projections, and funding requirements.

Construction of the legally mandated Merced-Bakersfield segment is underway. The Authority reduced costs in this segment by 30 percent through efficiencies identified in their program of reassessment.

CAP-AND-TRADE EXTENSION: CAP-AND-INVEST

In September 2025, Governor Newsom extended Cap and Trade through 2045, a fifteen-year extension from the original 2030 expiration. The program has since been renamed Cap-and-Invest. This extends the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)

and will directly support high-speed rail implementation. With a baseline of \$1 billion per year in Cap-and-Invest program funding through 2045.

The Authority also launched several major procurements in 2025. This progress kicked off with an industry forum held last January, where over 400 attendees from the private sector met with the Authority on a variety of topics. In August, the Authority began soliciting bids for track and systems materials from American manufacturers, and in November, the Authority issued one of the largest procurements for any infrastructure project in the nation with the \$3.5 billion track and systems construction contract. The following month, a Request for Qualifications was issued for a co-development agreement to select a private partner tasked to evaluate opportunities to invest its private equity and deliver project segments more efficiently.



UPCOMING CAPITAL AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR 2026

In the coming year, Californians will see progress on capital projects and new operational changes in support of the Rail Plan's vision.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Five groupings of key capital projects throughout the network will advance in 2026:

- **Perris Valley Line:** Metrolink will begin construction of capacity improvements to enable hourly bi-directional service.
- **San Bernardino Line:** Siding extension projects will begin construction in late 2026 to enable 30-minute bi-directional service.
- **Coast Subdivision:** Construction of Positive Train Control (PTC) systems will begin on the Coast Subdivision between Gilroy and San Luis Obispo. Completing this project allows more passenger train travel on the Coast Subdivision, which is currently limited to only one round-trip passenger train per day.
- **Central Valley:** In 2026, two trackwork projects will be completed that will support service reliability and on-time performance in the Central Valley.
- **Regional Rail in San Diego:** Construction is expected to start on a project to extend Coaster service south of Santa Fe Station to the San Diego Convention center.

OPERATIONAL CHANGES

Third Daily Surfliner to San Luis Obispo: LOSSAN and funding partners Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) are partnering to deliver a third daily Surfliner train to San Luis Obispo, bringing the total number of daily train services between San Luis Obispo and the rest of Southern California to four when Amtrak's Coast Starlight is counted.

SMART Daily Services Increase: As a result of the multi-agency Marin-Sonoma Coordinated Transit Service Plan, SMART will increase daily weekday round trips by 14% from 21 to 24, and daily weekend round trips by 50% from 8 to 12. These new trips will reduce redundancies between the Golden Gate Transit U.S. 101 services and SMART train service.

The next State Rail Annual Report will provide updates on progress for these capital and operational initiatives, along with new projects that support the 2024 State Rail Plan vision.





CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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