

Planning/Policy/ Programming

May 2025

Project Title: Development of Performance-Based Multihazard Engineering (PBME) Framework with Inclusion of Climate Change and Bridge Vulnerability

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Best Practices in Project Delivery for Transit

This research looks to identifying the best practices from Caltrans project delivery process and recommendations on which to apply to future transit capital projects.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Recent research has shown that transit capital projects in the United States can cost as much as ten times more than similar projects in peer nations (Goldwyn et al., 2023). With projects taking longer and costing more, there is a need to drastically reduce project costs both as a matter of public fund stewardship and to preserve California's ability to meet future mobility demand in a more sustainable manner. While part of the cost of labor, procurement, and structures is determined by factors outside of an agency's control, a project's expected cost can also fluctuate based on the efficiency of project management. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Local Assistance (DLA) needs additional information on best practices in project management to determine whether new models of interaction between Caltrans and subrecipient agencies at a project level can produce a consistent benefit. Specifically, Caltrans needs more information on whether there are patterns of challenges that can be addressed by economies of scale, funding or delivery mechanisms from other project types that can be applied to transit, and whether there are governance changes that can ensure on-time and on-budget delivery of transit projects.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The product of this research is a report identifying the best practices from Caltrans project delivery process and recommendations on which to apply to future transit capital projects. Detailed case study reports will yield data that is comparable across project types and information on cross-institutional strengths and weaknesses of specific projects as



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they progressed. This will address a critical need to more effectively use allocated resources, rather than allow cost overruns to redirect funding from new projects.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The DLA Local Programs Portfolio Management will pilot the identified best practices on a set of transit capital projects in an upcoming project portfolio. This will allow Caltrans to directly address the challenges identified in the research, presumably using existing resources directed toward project delivery in local assistance programs. This pilot can be applied as early as 2026 as transit capital projects come online for that fiscal year. If pilots prove to be successful, new governance structures, procurement practices, and standards can be implemented across the State and will reduce project costs and timelines, saving valuable resources.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The desired outcome will be recommendations on broad changes in project delivery that can help solve the issue of rising transit capital project costs and delayed schedules. These best practices can help Caltrans better understand what parts of the transit project delivery process are most effective and efficient, as well as opportunities for improvement. Similar work exists as proof of concept, where a potential co-PI has investigated projects on the east coast and internationally to comparatively analyze project delivery and identify key issues.