



Director's Message

Caltrans and its partners are launching a wave of road repair and construction projects around the state, and there will be a level of activity that has not been seen for decades as we begin to restore our vast but battered State Highway System.

As Caltrans director, I'm thrilled to play a role in this coming transformation being made possible by the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017, known as Senate Bill 1 (SB 1).

On the front lines, though, will be the thousands of workers who will be doing the hard, physical, and dangerous jobs of rebuilding and maintaining the state roadways — often as vehicles speed by within mere feet of them.

Highway construction and maintenance is one of the most hazardous jobs in California, and the nation. With more work zones being set up in the next few years, we are taking every step we can to make sure that everyone — those wearing Caltrans orange, highway contractors, truck drivers, or families on vacation — gets home safely.

We're being helped by advances in equipment technology that reduce the exposure of work crews to potentially deadly roadways. We are using, or testing new generation remote-controlled mowers, motorized pothole patchers, automated flagging devices and multiuse trimming machines that work faster and eliminate the need for manual vegetation clearing, to name a few safety enhancements.

Caltrans also is employing a best practices approach for construction projects to safely guide motorists through as conditions change.

But even the most secure cocoon we can construct around our work crews can be shattered in an instant if those traveling the roads don't have the same focus.

Our message of safety first and foremost is brought

home every spring, when we mourn and honor those workers who did not make it home to the embrace of their families. Individual Caltrans regional districts staged their own Fallen Workers Memorials as part of Caltrans Safety Awareness Week, culminating in a large contingent of employees and families gathering on the steps of the state Capitol in Sacramento.

Unfortunately, this year we inscribed two more names on our memorial. We paid special tribute to a bridge toll collector who was killed when a suspected drunken driver crashed into her booth, and a painting supervisor who was shot and killed on the job. Their tragic deaths brought to 188 the number of Caltrans workers who have been killed on the job since 1921.

At the ceremony, I was particularly moved by the appearance of Deborah Prochnow, a Caltrans Maintenance Division manager who works in our Los Angeles-based District 7. She read a poem she wrote about her harrowing experiences working along roadsides.

I want to share a short sample:

"You will stuff the brush with death way down deep.

You will get your instructions for the day put on your vest and hard hat and get back to work.

You are the unsung hero protecting people who don't see you."

When you are driving through work zones, we urge you to put away all your distractions and focus on your surroundings. Plan for delays and let's make sure we all get to where we are going safely.

Laurie Berman
Director of Caltrans

Cover: What will California's transportation network look like in the future? Will we be riding in autonomous taxis, belong to an electric bicycle sharing club, using a printing process to create our vehicles of tomorrow? And how will Caltrans adapt to this new transportation world? A new report lays out some possible paths for Caltrans planners to consider. *Modified illustration courtesy of vecteezy.com.*