



# Caltrans Easing Burden for ADA Travelers

## New Railcars, Station Platform Changes Will Improve Access and Comfort

New railcars that will give greater mobility to riders with disabilities have been ordered by Caltrans to add to its San Joaquin intercity train routes. The 49 cars should begin rolling on the tracks starting in 2020.

The new passenger cars, being built by Siemens Mobility in Sacramento, represent a major upgrade in comfort and accessibility for riders who rely on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services. The total project cost is \$152 million, paid for by a Federal Railroad Administration grant and state Proposition 1B bond funds.

Among the state-of-the-art ADA amenities aboard the new cars:

- Aisleways throughout the entire train at least 32 inches wide to provide ample space for people using wheelchairs to access all rail car areas, including restrooms. Interior vestibule doors also will slide open and close automatically, offering passengers in wheelchairs easier access when moving from car to car, or the ability to execute a 180 degree turn.
- Café cars are still in the development stage, but will be designed with compliant reach ranges for ADA passengers to access food service amenities such as condiment station items, and accessible counter height at food service area for service and payment. The café cars will include ADA seating areas to accommodate passengers choosing to stay in their mobility device, and side transfer-capable seating to allow moving to a seat from a mobility device. For passengers choosing the latter, there will be an area for wheelchair storage.
- State-of-the-art restrooms will include touchless controls for sink, dryer and soap dispenser. The restroom is designed to be as roomy as possible, exceeding the 35 inch-by-60 inch federal clear floor space requirement.

Vertical and horizontal grab bars will be mounted along two walls. All restroom equipment will either be touchless or operable with one hand, and all push buttons can be activated by the touch of a finger or fist. Caltrans is conducting its accessibility work with input from disability access advocates throughout the state.

“We are very excited about the prospect for people who use wheelchairs to board trains independently once the mini-high platforms are constructed,” said Autumn Elliott, senior counsel for Disability Rights California. “We were also thrilled to hear that people who use wheelchairs will be able to travel the full length of the train once the new train cars are in place.”

Advocates from Disability Rights California and other disability rights organizations, including independent living centers throughout the state, have provided important feedback to Caltrans as it develops the design of its café cars and restrooms.

Caltrans also is working with the San Joaquin and Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authorities to build mini-high platforms at existing stations to allow level boarding for passengers with disabilities. Automatic “gap fillers” on the new railcars will extend from the railcar to the mini-high platform, creating an ADA-compliant interface/ bridge between the train and platform, making it easy for passengers using wheelchairs, pushing strollers, rolling bikes, or carrying heavy luggage to board railcars without help.

Construction of the special platforms is scheduled to start in 2023. **MM**

*Source: Momoko Tamaoki, Rail Transportation Manager, Caltrans Division of Rail and Mass Transit*