

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: May 17-18, 2023

From: TANISHA TAYLOR, Interim Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.14, Information

Prepared By: Brigitte Driller
Associate Deputy Director

Published Date: May 5, 2023

Subject: Comments on the Draft 2023 California State Rail Plan

Summary:

On March 10, 2023, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) released the Draft 2023 California State Rail Plan for a 60-day public review period. The Rail Plan is available at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/rail-and-mass-transportation/california-state-rail-plan>.

The 2023 Rail Plan establishes a strategic framework for coordinating incremental planning and investment decisions across multiple stakeholder rail and planning agencies based on a plan for integrating the different high speed, intercity, regional and intercity bus systems across the state as part of a seamless network. The Rail Plan is one of the individual modal plans that Caltrans maintains to support the goals and policies established in the California Transportation Plan 2050.

At the March 22-23, 2023, California Transportation Commission (Commission) Meeting, Caltrans presented an informational update on the Draft Rail Plan. At that meeting, the Commission took action to require staff to solicit Commissioner input consistent with the Bagley Keene Open Meeting Act prior to the May Commission meeting; delegate authority to Commission staff to submit comments on the Draft 2023 California State Rail Plan; and require staff publish the submitted letter as part of the May 2023 Commission meeting agenda. The purpose of this item is to report back to the Commission on the comments that were submitted, which are included as Attachment A.

The comment letter includes the following recommendations:

- Summarize stakeholder engagement efforts in the final Rail Plan or appendix.
- Consider the Rail Plan as comprehensive multimodal corridor plans are prioritized, scoped, and prepared.
- Include the state's rail network in the scope of Caltrans' future climate adaptation and resiliency planning efforts.

Background:

The Federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act requires the State of California develop a State Rail Plan to be eligible to receive federal funding for rail projects. The State Rail Plan must be updated and accepted by the Federal Railroad Administration every four years.

California Government Code Section 14036 requires Caltrans to prepare a California State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) that generally aligns with federal requirements. The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) is designated to approve the Rail Plan. Section 14036 further requires that Caltrans submit the Rail Plan to the Commission for its advice prior to CalSTA's approval.

Caltrans published the most recent version of the Rail Plan, the 2018 California State Rail Plan, on September 10, 2018. The 2018 Rail Plan is available here: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/rail-and-mass-transportation/california-state-rail-plan>.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Commission Comment Letter to Caltrans

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TANISHA TAYLOR, Interim Executive Director

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Attachment A



CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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May 5, 2023

Tony Tavares, Director
California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street, MS 49
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Transportation Commission Comments on the Draft 2023 California State Rail Plan

Dear Director Tavares:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft 2023 California State Rail Plan (Rail Plan). We appreciate the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) efforts to update the Rail Plan, consistent with federal and state statutory requirements. The draft Rail Plan builds from the framework established in the 2018 California State Rail Plan and presents information in a clear and easy-to-follow manner. In particular, we appreciate the inclusion of new sections on "Progress Since the 2018 California State Rail Plan," "Engaging Equity," "Impact of COVID-19," and new sections on climate change adaptation and resiliency. We would also like to recognize Caltrans staff's responsiveness to meeting with us and incorporating preliminary feedback.

The Commission respectfully provides the following comments and recommendations for your consideration:

Stakeholder Engagement

Caltrans continues to undertake robust stakeholder engagement to inform the development of the draft Rail Plan. Please add a summary of stakeholder engagement efforts to the final Rail Plan or appendix. We encourage Caltrans to do this level of outreach for all planning documents.

Director Tavares

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Corridor Planning

We appreciate Caltrans' efforts to bring a corridor-specific focus to the Rail Plan by identifying passenger rail service goals and capital improvements for each listed corridor. We understand that Caltrans is in the process of prioritizing its district-led comprehensive multimodal corridor planning efforts. The Division of Transportation Planning should consult the final California State Rail Plan when scoping and prioritizing corridor plans.

Climate Adaptation

In the section entitled Resiliency in the Transportation Network, it is noted that the rail network is not analyzed in the Caltrans District adaptation priorities reports since the network is not owned by the State. The Commission encourages Caltrans to include the state's rail network in the scope for future adaptation efforts.

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide comments for consideration. If you have any questions please contact Laura Pennebaker, Deputy Director for Transportation Planning, at (916) 654-4245 or email Laura.Pennebaker@catc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



TANISHA TAYLOR
Interim Executive Director

c: Commissioners, California Transportation Commission
Toks Omishakin, Secretary, California State Transportation Agency
Chad Edison, Deputy Secretary for Rail and Transit, California State Transportation Agency
Jeanie Ward-Waller, Deputy Director, Caltrans Planning and Modal Programs