

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: August 20-21, 2026

From: TANISHA TAYLOR, Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.3, Information

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Subject: Innovations in Transportation: Caltrans Advanced Air Mobility and Drone Applications

Summary:

Tarek Tabshouri, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division Chief of Aeronautics, and Michael Hank, Caltrans District 11 Division Chief of Land Surveys, will present on aerial technologies in transportation.

Mr. Tabshouri will share the State's efforts to prepare for [Advanced Air Mobility](#) (AAM), including implementation of [Senate Bill 800](#) (Caballero, Chapter 416, Statutes of 2023), development of the State's first AAM framework, infrastructure readiness, vertiport planning considerations, and federal and state agency coordination efforts.

Mr. Hank will provide a local implementation example, highlighting how Caltrans District 11 is utilizing [Unmanned Aircraft Systems \(UAS\)](#), commonly known as drones, to improve safety, efficiency, and operational capabilities across a range of transportation activities, such as emergency response, construction documentation, land surveying, culvert and bridge inspections, environmental work, wildlife and vegetation management, and transportation management.

Background:

Advanced Air Mobility refers to an emerging aviation ecosystem that includes new aircraft technologies, such as electric Vehicle Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft, and related infrastructure needed to support future air transportation services. Senate Bill 800 required Caltrans to develop an AAM Three-Year Implementation Work Plan (Work Plan), which assesses California's infrastructure readiness and identifies priorities and next steps to support the safe, equitable, and coordinated integration of AAM technologies. The draft Work Plan, published in December 2025, provides a statewide planning framework for how emerging aerial technologies may be safely and effectively incorporated into California's multimodal transportation network. The Work Plan is expected to be finalized this year.

Caltrans District 11 currently operates a fleet of seven aircraft with 20 certified UAS pilots and has conducted more than 400 missions since 2019. While Caltrans District 11 has been operating drones for more than seven years, they continue to innovate in this space. UAS technology allows Caltrans to assess, and sometimes complete, some of its highest-risk tasks remotely, significantly improving safety for both employees and the public, with the added benefits of minimizing negative impacts and supporting robust data products. Through collaboration between the Caltrans Division of Aeronautics, Caltrans UAS Steering Committee, the Federal Aviation Administration, partner agencies, and aircraft manufacturers, Caltrans has made substantial progress in expanding operational capabilities, including types of aircraft that can be flown, where, how far, and under what conditions, all in support of a thriving and connected California.