MONTHLY SBCCOG TRANSPORTATION REPORT

A summary of recent federal, state, regional and local developments and trends in transportation

COVERING JULY 2025

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Federal

Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Pulls the Plug on $4B for California High Speed Rail

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) terminated approximately $4 billion in unspent federal funding for California's High Speed Rail project. After 16 years and roughly $15 billion spent, not one high speed track has been laid by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA).

The decision follows FRA's exhaustive compliance review, after which the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) was given two opportunities to respond consistent with the grant agreements. FRA concluded that neither response addressed their significant concerns and that CHSRA could not meet its obligations under the grant agreement.

In addition to canceling $4 billion in unspent federal funds to CHSRA, Secretary Duffy has directed FRA to review other obligated and unobligated grants related to the CHSRA project. The Department of Transportation will also consult with the Department of Justice on the finding of FRA's Compliance Review, including potentially clawing back funding related to California's High Speed Rail and other potential issues under Federal law.

CHSRA's own Inspector General issued a report in February noting serious issues with the project, including that CHSRA would not complete the Merced to Bakersfield line by 2033.

Following this report, FRA conducted an exhaustive Compliance Review, which resulted in a comprehensive report over 300 pages long, containing 9 key findings, and ultimately concluding that CHSRA could not meet its binding obligations under the agreements it made to receive Federal funding.

The findings included:

1. CHSRA has executed numerous change orders and will likely have many more change orders in the near future to account for contractor expenses because of project delays.
2. CHSRA has already missed its deadline for finalizing its rolling stock procurement.
3. CHSRA has at least a $7 billion funding gap to complete the Early Operating Segment (EOS), with no credible plan to secure additional funds.
4. CHSRA does not have a viable path to complete the EOS by 2033 per its commitment in the FY10 Agreement and the FSP Agreement.

5. CHSRA relies on volatile non-federal funding sources which present significant project risk.
6. CHSRA lacks time and money to electrify the EOS by 2033.
7. CHSRA's budget contingency is inadequate to cover anticipated contractor delay claims.
8. CHSRA has overrepresented its ridership projections for the EOS substantially.
9. CHSRA lacks the capacity to deliver the EOS by 2033.

Following the Compliance Review, FRA sent CHSRA a formal Notice of Proposed Determination to Terminate on June 4th. Pursuant to the Notice, CHSRA provided an initial response on June 11th and a final response on July 7th. Neither response satisfactorily addressed FRA's significant concerns, as described in the Compliance Review, and FRA has therefore decided to terminate the agreements. FRA will start exploring how these funds can be made available to viable and meritorious passenger rail projects.

State

California Invests $1.5 Billion to Reduce Congestion, Improve Safety, and Grow the World's Fourth-Largest Economy

The California Transportation Commission in late June awarded nearly $1.5 billion to 37 projects across California that support a vibrant economy, elevate community voices, move people and goods efficiently and safely, and ensure a healthy environment for all.

The projects selected by the Commission have total costs exceeding $17 billion and will create more than 227,000 jobs. In addition to reducing congestion and making it safer and easier to travel around communities across the state, these investments also make California's freight system more efficient by better connecting ports, farms, and consumers while increasing the number of zero-emission truck stations in the state by 25 percent.

The Interagency Equity Advisory Committee, convened by the Commission, the California State Transportation Agency, and the California Department of Transportation, reviewed project applications to ensure projects reflected community input and priorities. Projects were selected using strategies from the state's Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure, to help achieve California's climate, public health, safety, equity and economic goals.

The Commission awarded funding to the projects as part of the fourth funding cycle of competitive grant programs established by Senate Bill 1, the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. With these investments and previously awarded funds, the 2024 Senate Bill 1 programs include nearly $1.7 billion over two fiscal years for three competitive grant programs: the Solutions for Congested Corridors Program, the Trade Corridor Enhancement Program, and the Local Partnership Competitive Program.

Highlights from each program are included below (note that some projects receive funding in multiple programs):

Solutions for Congested Corridors Program

- $483 million in Senate Bill 1 funds for 7 projects.
- Funds projects that reduce traffic congestion, expand transit service, and improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety.
- Supports affordable housing and mixed-use (residential and commercial) development by providing high-frequency transit options and easy access to safe biking and walking options.
- Includes bus and rail upgrades that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

Trade Corridor Enhancement Program

- $995.5 million in program funds for 24 new projects and two previously awarded projects.
- Shifts freight from trucks to rail, reducing pollution-causing idling for trucks, cars, and trains.
- Enhances safety by eliminating at-grade crossings and taking freight trucks off neighborhood streets.
- Includes more than $94.2 million for zero-emission freight infrastructure to build refueling and recharging facilities along key freight corridors.
- Adds 509 charging ports, increasing the existing number of available medium- and heavy-duty charging stations by 25 percent statewide.

Local Partnership Competitive Program

- $201.7 million in Senate Bill 1 funds for 11 projects. Funding in this program is available to jurisdictions where residents voted to approve transportation-specific taxes or fees.
- Expands local and regional transit networks by building new and enhanced transit stations and buying new zero-emissions buses.
- Improves interchanges, overcrossings, and other facilities to create a safer, more welcoming environment for all travelers.

Region

A Line Extension from Glendora to Pomona to open on Friday, September 19

Metro Board Chair Fernando Dutra announced on July 24 that the A Line Extension to Pomona will open on Friday, September 19.

The A Line Extension will add 9.1 miles of track and four new stations in Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, and Pomona, connecting the people who live and work in these San Gabriel Valley cities with one another, Greater Los Angeles and beyond. Riders will be able to transfer between Metro and Metrolink at Pomona Station, giving everyone a new, faster way to ride between the Inland Empire and Foothill Cities corridor.

The extension will improve access to educational institutions (such as Cal Poly Pomona, University of La Verne, Mt. San Antonio College, and Pomona College among others), recreation centers like the Los Angeles County Fairplex (where cricket will make its official return to the Olympic Games in 2028), as well as regional parks, museums, and historic downtowns.

The project marks the ninth project completed in Metro's Twenty-Eight by '28 initiative, an ambitious plan to enhance the region's transit infrastructure in time for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The A Line extension will provide an alternative to the 210 freeway. Each station will be equipped with bike sheds, EV chargers, vehicle drop-offs and park-and-ride facilities.

A little background: The Foothill Corridor was once served by Pacific Electric's Monrovia-Glendora line, but rail disappeared from the region in 1951. In 1990, Metro's predecessor, the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC), began studying routes to return rail to the corridor, spurred by the purchase of a former Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (ATSF) right-of-way.

In 1998, the California State Legislature established a joint powers authority—the Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority—to oversee building the extension from Pasadena to Montclair. The first section between downtown L.A. and Pasadena opened in 2003 and the first extension to Azusa, debuted in 2016.

In 2020, construction began on the soon-to-open section that extends the A Line to Pomona. This past January, the Construction Authority turned the project over to Metro for training and pre-revenue service.

Trends

Uber is finally letting women riders in the US match with women drivers

Six years ago, Uber launched a feature in Saudi Arabia that let women drivers on its ride-hailing app ask to be connected to female riders. Since then, the "women preferences" feature has rolled out to 40 countries, from Argentina and Brazil to Canada, India, and Mexico.

In a few weeks, this feature will finally make its way to the United States, the company said on Wednesday. Uber plans to pilot the feature in Detroit, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Women will be able to set a preference for a woman driver in the Uber app, increasing their chances of a match. When a female rider requests a trip, they will see an option called “women drivers.” If the wait is longer than expected, the rider can opt for another ride, according to Uber.

Women drivers can switch their settings to “women rider preference.” This setting can be changed if the driver wants to receive trip requests from all riders.

Ride-hailing companies like Uber and Lyft have grappled with ways to improve safety and attract the broadest set of users — both on the driver and rider sides. But it hasn’t been an easy road.

Ride-hailing safety has been a long-standing issue, one that has often pitted advocates and regulators against companies like Uber and Lyft. And while rare, reports of sexual assaults and fatal attacks have only fueled those concerns.

Uber reported 36 physical assault fatalities in 2021 and 2022, according to its latest U.S. safety report released last year. Uber noted that physical assault fatalities had jumped from previous years. While the incidents still made up a tiny fraction of the 1.8 billion trips that were made in 2021 and 2022 in the U.S., the uptick prompted the company to launch a variety of features to increase safety, including verified rider badges and options to audio and video record rides.

Sexual assault incidents have dropped consistently since Uber began reporting the data in 2017. Uber reported 5,981 sexual assaults from 2017 to 2018, and that figure dropped by more than half to 2,717 in the 2021 to 2022 period.

Meanwhile, Uber and Lyft have sought ways to attract more female drivers. Both companies have more male drivers than women — for instance, about one in five Uber drivers in the U.S. are women. The “women preferences” feature, designed to give both the rider and driver some control, could help attract more users on both sides.

Uber was the first major ride-hailing company to launch the women preferences feature. However, rival Lyft was the first to offer a women-matching feature in the United States — its primary market.