



Director's Message

Caltrans and our contractor partners came through with flying colors in response to the storms that drenched our state this winter.

In just a couple months, we endured the worst pummeling in the last 20 years. Although it is too soon for a final tally, we know the repair cost will far exceed one-half billion dollars.

Meteorologists are calling this weather phenomenon an atmospheric river. For most of the state, these storms brought a welcome end to a long drought, but they also washed away any notion that we have a sustainable infrastructure to carry us into the next half-century. The consequences of deferred maintenance and underinvestment are now on stark display.

During the emergency, Californians were able to witness the very best of their Department of Transportation. Our staff worked around the clock for weeks at a time, braving storms that wreaked havoc around the state. During this time, workers responded to more than 300 damage sites, including incidents ranging from a road collapse so large that it swallowed an unoccupied fire truck, to massive mudslides that buried sections of a major highway several feet deep.

I would like to acknowledge that emergencies are not the only time our people shine. Each year, our snow crews routinely deal with white-out conditions to keep the mountain passes open to travelers and commerce (page 24).

Likewise, our staff's work during inclement weather is not the only example of the great work being accomplished across the state. A great deal of deliberation and effort went into the draft, "Toward an Active California, State Bicycle + Pedestrian Plan," released in February (page 14). I'm also proud of the people

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who completed 217 Project Initiation Documents last year to better estimate project costs early in the process (page 30), and those who worked to evaluate 18 key rail crossings so the Legislature could consider investments in safety and freight efficiency (page 32).

I also can point to a decade's worth of effective and productive work resulting from the voters' passage of Proposition 1B, a \$19.9 billion bond package (page 8). Or the long-awaited completion of the Willets Bypass, which not only improves efficiency and safety, but taught us valuable lessons on working with our community partners (page 34).

We are working effectively with contractors large and small to confront the insect crisis that has claimed more than 100 million trees and continues its tragic march through our conifer forests as a result of the ongoing drought in the past several years (page 19).

The same can-do spirit that carried us through this record-setting winter is hard at work every day, in every Caltrans building and vehicle. We shine in a crisis because of the things we do every day. MM

Malcolm Dougherty, *Director of Caltrans*

Cover: Caltrans is in the midst of what may be a decades-long effort to clear dead, dying or hazardous trees within the state highway system right of way, including these trees along U.S. Highway 50 near Pollock Pines in El Dorado County. The drought-weakened trees are unable to produce enough sap to ward off hungry beetles, a situation that has already killed more than 100 million conifers. See story, page 18.