

California State Rail Plan – Freight Element

Overview

The Department is required, under California Government Code Section 14036, to prepare a ten-year California State Rail Plan (CSRP). The last Rail Plan approved by the Governor was the for the period 2007-08 to 2017-18, published in March 2008. In November 2009, the Department informed the California Transportation Commission that there would be a delay in the submittal of the 2009-10 to 2019-20 CSRP until after new federal guidelines for state rail plans were released.

Background

The Federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) established a new federal policy patterned after federal highway programs. The rail program mandate includes new requirements to develop state rail plans that include three elements (passenger rail, high speed rail, freight rail); completed state rail plans approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary are now a requirement. PRIIA requires that state rail plans be updated every five years, while state law requires an update every two years.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a Preliminary State Rail Plan Outline (Preliminary Outline) in March 2010. The new Federal rail plan requirements presented in the Preliminary Outline are much more extensive than the existing state requirements and require that an integrated and comprehensive plan for the existing and proposed conventional and high-speed passenger rail system and the freight rail system be developed.

The Department applied for an FRA grant, and received approval in October 2010 to produce, with the aid of a consultant, a Rail Plan that would comply with both California and federal law. The grant is for \$3.13 million, including \$753,500 in state matching funds. The contract is scheduled to start in spring of 2011 and be completed two years later. A Draft Rail Plan will be presented to the public in summer 2013 and the Final Rail Plan is anticipated to be completed by December 2013.

CSRP Integration

The CSRP will complement the California Interregional Blueprint (CIB) currently under development by the Department which will be the foundation for the 2040 California Transportation Plan. It will also integrate with the development of the California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP) and address goods movement in more detail than the CSRP. Overall, the Freight Mobility Plan will involve substantial stakeholder outreach, analyses of key goods movement issues and trends, possible heightened focus on priority corridors, and development of a freight mobility and infrastructure action plan, including funding options.

CSRP Freight Element

The freight element of the CSRP will cover many topic areas including but not limited to:

- Policy level discussion of California's importance to national and international trade,
- Analysis of future global trade demands In the Pacific Rim,
- Identification of priority issues, strategies and actions to improve the freight rail system,
- Discussion and analysis of freight rail performance measures and benchmarking practices among states and their relevance to California,
- Analysis of private versus public investment in freight rail infrastructure,
- A description of how freight volumes on key rail routes through California (Donner, Transcontinental and Sunset) feed into national distribution centers, facilities and destinations such as Chicago, Memphis, Kansas City, St. Louis and New Orleans,
- Identification of major freight rail intermodal connections and facilities in California,
- The role and issues of short line railroads in the state, regions and local communities,
- Summary of major commodities and industries dependent on rail in California and Class I business mix analysis,
- Assessment and gap analysis of the deficiencies and redundancies in the California freight rail network,
- Impacts to the California freight system resulting from changes to supply chains, industry practice, and freight shipping patterns relative to the origin and destination of freight rail movement,
- Goods movement and freight rail environmental impacts to California communities,
- Freight rail and passenger rail shared right of way conflicts including a discussion of Positive Train Control (PTC)

Value of the CSRP Freight Element to Caltrans

As illustrated by the above topics the CSRP freight element provides an opportunity to analyze the California freight rail network, California global trade and logistics issues, to interact and get input and feedback from the rail and freight industry stakeholders, and provide a document to direct and inform the Department. This opportunity is unprecedented given the scope of work, dollar amount of the contract and expertise of the firm selected to perform the work.

What's New in This Freight Element?

Unlike previous CSRP freight elements this plan will have a featured GIS section and expanded rail abandonments and rail preservation section which will provide a wealth of data, metadata and files, and provide a much enhanced rail and freight rail mapping capability to the Department. All GIS files will become the property of Caltrans upon completion of the study.

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