



# 2020



CALIFORNIA  
TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2020  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
TO THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE



## COMMISSION YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, the Commission shifted its meetings, interagency coordination, and public engagement activities to web-based platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this transition, the Commission successfully continued its work throughout 2020, which centered around these areas:

### Program Guidelines

After holding dozens of workshops statewide to receive public input, the Commission adopted updated guidelines for 2020 programs, which strengthen program objectives. For instance, the 2020 Solutions for Congestion Corridors Program guidelines formalized criteria to assess how well a project supports mixed-use development with multimodal choices and infill development. The Commission this year also further increased the emphasis on community engagement in its updates to program guidelines.

### Competitive Program Applications

The Commission received requests totaling two-and-a-half times the available funding for its four competitive programs combined. The most oversubscribed program is the Active Transportation Program. The Commission received over 450 applications for this program requesting \$2.3 billion - nearly five times the available funding.

### Program Adoptions

In 2020, the Commission committed \$22 billion over multiple years for over 1,200 projects in five programs funded in large part from the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (Senate Bill 1, Beall). These projects will help move the state toward its goal to have 98 percent of highway pavement in good or fair condition and to fix 500 additional bridges by 2027. Over a 20-year period, they will save 300 million person hours of travel time; reduce nearly 8 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions; and increase truck throughput for the movement of goods by over 70 million trucks, among other benefits. For the first time ever, the State Highway Operation and Protection Program adopted by the Commission included a \$100 million reservation for complete streets projects.

### Project Allocations

During FY 2019-20, the Commission continued to allocate state and federal funds to projects approved in initial Road Repair and Accountability Act programming cycles: \$7.3 billion in total. These projects will repair California's highways and roads and make them safer; reduce congestion; enhance goods movement; and improve transit and active transportation. Since FY 2017-18, the Commission has allocated state and federal funds generating an estimated 350,000 jobs.

# LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

State law requires the Commission to include in its Annual Report specific, action-oriented, and pragmatic legislative recommendations to improve transportation.

## Transportation Funding

The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced state transportation revenues by \$1.9 billion through FY 2020-21. At the same time, the Commission this year saw substantial demand for competitive transportation funds. Additionally, the need to replace the gas tax with a road charge was heightened as new emphasis was placed on zero-emission vehicle adoption by 2035. **The Commission therefore believes it is important to maintain and protect existing transportation funds while also addressing immediate and long-term unmet funding needs.** To that end, the Commission recommends the Legislature:

- Urge Congress and the President to provide relief funding to fully make up for state, local, and transit agency transportation revenue losses due to COVID-19.
- Augment the Active Transportation Program with cap-and-trade funds, given the program is severely oversubscribed and these projects advance climate goals.
- Dedicate interest earned on transportation revenues to specific programs, to clarify use of these funds.
- Adjust the Local Streets and Roads Program maintenance of effort, given impacts from COVID-19.
- Authorize a new road charge pilot program to test revenue collection.

## Contracting with Tribal Governments

State law restricts Caltrans' ability to directly contract with tribal governments. As a result, Caltrans works through intermediaries, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but this can cause uncertainties and delays. **The Commission believes certain statutory restrictions can be removed to facilitate project delivery for tribal governments.** Specifically, the Commission recommends the Legislature:

- Remove statutory restrictions requiring a limited waiver of sovereign immunity and limiting project types for which Caltrans can directly contract with tribal governments.

## Interregional and Freight Planning

In such a vast and populous state as California, efficient interregional mobility for people and goods is critical. **The Commission believes opportunities exist to better align and improve the state's interregional and freight planning,** and recommends the Legislature:

- Beginning with the second update expected in 2025, require Caltrans to submit updates of the Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan to the Commission, as was statutorily required for the initial plan developed in 2015.
- Require the California Freight Mobility Plan to explain how freight funding can best be utilized to support California's economy and further reduce freight related environmental and community impacts.



# POLICY ISSUES

State law directs the Commission in its Annual Report to discuss upcoming policy issues it has identified to be of concern to the public and the Legislature. Below are policy issues of focus for 2021.

## Equity and Public Engagement

This year, the Commission increased its equity efforts by engaging in presentations on equity at multiple Commission meetings and taking new action. **The Commission formed an Equity Advisory Roundtable; began planning Community Listening Sessions in partnership with the California State Transportation Agency and Caltrans; and started development of a Public Engagement Guide.** Commission staff also participated in a training series on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Commission will continue its efforts in 2021.

## Transit Operations

At meetings throughout the year, the Commission heard from transit associations and operators about the immense challenges they face from the COVID-19 pandemic. **Among the many issues facing transit, the Commission believes it is important for the state to partner with transit agencies in 2021 to consider how work schedules affect peak transit usage, options for new transit mobility models, and transit discount eligibility standardization.**

The California Transportation Commission was established in 1978 as an independent state entity. The Commission's primary responsibilities are funding transportation projects and advising and assisting the Secretary of Transportation and the Legislature on state transportation policies and plans.



## Transportation, Housing, and Climate

In 2020, the Commission expanded upon its efforts to coordinate across these areas. **The Commission joined the Executive Order N-19-19 State Agency Working Group to work on an action plan for aligning program investments with climate goals.** The Commission also held two meetings with the California Air Resources Board and the California Department of Housing and Community Development. Strengthening connections across these areas will continue to be a focus of the Commission in 2021.

## Telework and Transportation

At its June meeting, the Commission heard a presentation from Caltrans on how teleworking was affecting transportation. Potential benefits cited included reducing air pollution emissions and congestion—however, it also was noted that telework opportunities differ by occupation, race, and access to broadband. Subsequently, **Commission staff partnered with Caltrans and other state agencies on a preliminary research investigation into telework that will be used to guide future policy discussions on this topic in 2021.**

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