



ASCE Region 9 (California) Transportation Committee Legislative Day June 14th, 2017, Sacramento



Gyan Sinha (Kimley-Horn), Kenneth Rosenfield (City of Laguna Hills), David Schwegel (Precision Civil Engineering), Elizabeth Ruedas (CNC Engineering), Darwin Vargas (Caltrans), Josue Vaglienty (HNTB)

On Thursday, April 6, the State Legislature passed SB 1 (Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017) allocating \$52.4 billion in repairs and improvements to the state's transportation system. This represents the most significant transportation funding package in a quarter century. On Wednesday, June 14, six members of the ASCE California (Region 9) Transportation Committee met with high-level transportation decision makers to thank them for their courageous leadership in passing SB 1, determine what this means for California moving forward, and identify ways that professional associations like ASCE can help. A total of seven meetings took place. These visits were set up by ASCE Region 9 Legislative Advocate Richard Markuson.

Legislative Visits:

1. Brian Kelly, State Transportation Secretary, California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) (www.calsta.ca.gov)
2. Roger Dickinson, Executive Director, Transportation California (www.transportationca.com)
3. Ofelia Alcantara, Acting Director of Engineering, California High Speed Rail Authority (www.hsr.ca.gov)
4. Randy Chin, Consultant to Senator Jim Beall, Senate Transportation Committee (www.sen.ca.gov)
5. Janet Dawson, Consultant to Assemblymember Jim Frazier, Assembly Transportation Committee (www.asm.ca.gov)
6. Susan Bransen, Executive Director, California Transportation Commission (CTC) (www.catc.ca.gov)
7. Senator Josh Newman, California State Senate (www.sen.ca.gov)



Darwin Vargas, Elizabeth Ruedas, Secretary Brian Kelly, David Schwegel, Kenneth Rosenfield, Gyan Sinha

Brian Kelly, State Transportation Secretary, California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) (www.calsta.ca.gov)

- Key Focus: SB1 implementation: CTC is formulating guidelines. The CTC just held an event on this topic at Sacramento City Hall, June 8-9.
- Note the current bills that resonate with ASCE's Grand Challenge of reducing the lifecycle cost of infrastructure projects by 50% between now and 2025.
- Chasing Republicans with "reform" measures may be challenging, as no reforms so far have resonated with Republicans. This lack of Republican engagement issue is unique to California, as 23 other states including many with Republican-controlled legislatures have recently passed robust transportation funding measures.
- Infrastructure is one of the key areas where California is in agreement with the Trump Administration.
- A Federal Executive Order was signed on January 24, 2017 streamlining the environmental review process. California would like to apply this streamlining process to the High-Speed Rail project (www.hsr.ca.gov) and other large-scale projects.
- Caltrans has lost 4,000 employees over the last 10 years, bringing the personnel level to a 19-year low despite an increased project workload. This is an example of efficiency. CalSTA will provide additional talking points to support this efficiency argument.
- The USDOT relies on Caltrans more than any other DOT in the US.
- There are over 400 transportation agencies in California with individual decision making power, making it extremely difficult to expedite projects involving multiple jurisdictions.
- There's discussion about reducing the Self-Help County voter threshold from a $\frac{2}{3}$ -supermajority (67%) to 55%. It would need to pass the Legislature first, and then go to the public for a vote. It likely will not happen for at least another year.
- The 2019 Statewide Infrastructure Report Card should provide indications on whether or not we're trending in the right direction since the 2012 Report Card (www.ascecareportcard.org).



Gyan Sinha, Darwin Vargas, Kenneth Rosenfield, Roger Dickinson, Josue Vaglienty, Elizabeth Ruedas, David Schwegel

**Roger Dickinson, Executive Director, Transportation California
(www.transportationca.com)**

- Mr. Dickinson's background includes: Sacramento Regional Transit District Board, Sacramento County Supervisor, Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) (www.sacog.org) Board, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (www.capitolcorridor.org), Caltrans (www.dot.ca.gov), and Assemblymember (2010-2014) (www.asm.ca.gov).
- Slide 4 of "The Road Ahead for Transportation Funding in California" (ASCE, APWA Fresno, May 18, 2017) plots a "blue" line for VMT (vehicle miles traveled) growth and an "orange" line for fuel consumption decrease with a major diverging of the lines starting in 2004. The gap represents the "revenue loss due to increased fuel efficiency". By Fiscal Year 2017-2018, the gas tax will have less than half of the purchasing power that it did back in 1994. It has not been indexed for inflation, and vehicle fuel efficiency has increased considerably since 2007.
- The passage of SB1 means that agencies can "dust off their list of projects prioritized by PCI" (pavement condition index).
- In collaboration with stakeholders (including the California State Association of Counties and League of California Cities), maintain a consistent message and a sense of urgency. Let the public see the benefit of their tax dollars. A UC Berkeley Institute of Environmental Studies poll shows that only 35-40% of the respondents support a tax increase underscoring the importance of communicating what the public will get with these tax increases. The study simply asked about support for a tax increase with no indication of where the funds were actually going.
- Transportation California is coming up with new videos as the focus has shifted from 'why we need a tax increase' to 'what's going to get done with this increase in funding'.
- The recall of Senator Josh Newman is an opportunity for Republicans to get an extra seat, so that the Democrats no longer hold a $\frac{2}{3}$ -supermajority. SB1 was simply the vehicle for trying to obtain this extra seat.
- Transportation California will be providing their insight on what should potentially be included in the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) Report on the implementation of SB1.



- Transportation California will also be weighing in on the extension of Cap & Trade Legislation recognizing that the organization supports all modes of transportation including walking, bicycling, transit, intercity rail, high-speed rail, and roads.
- Public-Private Partnership (P3) authority expired last year. Transportation California will be formulating a position on P3's.
- SB1, although significant (\$52 billion over 10 years), is just a starting point with much more revenue needed to fulfill the need. SB1 reforms include Advance Mitigation and the creation of the position of Inspector General (accountability for all agencies receiving state funds).
- Caltrans plans to release its Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) (Road Charge Pilot Program) study later this year.
- General funding measures require only a 50% majority, while more specific measures require a two-thirds (67%) supermajority where it takes 2 yes votes to counteract 1 no vote.
- While SB1 contains strong promises for reducing congestion, no measure will completely eliminate congestion. The key is a balanced multi-modal system optimized by trip length, population density, and user preferences, among other considerations.
- SB1 is an opportunity to rebuild the public's confidence in government. Among the reform provisions is the expedited timeline for CEQA review (used on the Golden 1 Center in Sacramento, currently being used on the NFL Stadium in Los Angeles).



Lijia Zhang, Darwin Vargas, David Schwegel, Randy Anderson, Anush, Brian Sutliff, Ofelia Alcantara, Gyan Sinha

Ofelia Alcantara, Acting Director of Engineering, California High Speed Rail (HSR) Authority (www.hsr.ca.gov)

- While limited SB1 funds are going to the actual HSR program, a sizeable portion (\$400M) is going to the extension of the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) (www.acerail.com) Commuter Rail Service to Modesto (Senator Anthony Cannella’s District - the only Republican who voted yes on SB1). The Draft 2018 State Rail Plan is projected to come out within the next month. The passage of SB1 reinforces California’s commitment to a “complete transportation system” with no one project necessarily being deemed a “pet” project.
- The \$64B High-Speed Rail program target funding includes ⅓ by the State (Prop. 1A, SB 1029), ⅓ by the Federal Government, and ⅓ by the Private Sector. Cap and Trade would serve as the “backstop” as funding sources beyond Prop. 1A, Federal Grants, and SB 1029 begin to materialize.
- The Federal Government has agreed to fully fund their \$600M+ portion of the Caltrain electrification project between San Jose and San Francisco.
- The Authority’s Engineering Team consists of six engineers reporting to Chief Engineer Scott Jarvis with an additional layer of internal oversight provided by a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) consisting of HSR experts worldwide.
- The Caltrans Seismic Advisory Board (SAB) provides external oversight. When crossing faults, the objective is to be at-grade to avoid being on a bridge or within a tunnel when crossing a fault.
- The Design Criteria Manual (DCM) and Directive Drawings (DD’s) are being updated with tunneling information - a major consideration as HSR progresses over Pacheco Pass into the Silicon Valley and over the Tehachapi Mountains into the Los Angeles Basin. Tunneling includes single-bore and double-bore.
- A major consideration is the need to take boring samples within the acquired right of way.
- LiDAR and Geophysics studies provide images of the “bare ground” (trees stripped away) to assess the potential for geohazards such as landslides. In some cases, such observations have led to revisions in fault mapping.
- The San Jose to Merced Section would potentially be subdivided as follows: (1) San Jose, (2) Monterey Highway, (3) Morgan Hill to Gilroy, (4) Pacheco Pass, and (5) Central Valley.



Procurements will consist of individual construction packages for constructing the trackway civil infrastructure; followed by a separate procurement covering rails, electrification, and positive train control. This is similar to what is currently taking place on First Construction Segment (FCS) between Madera and Bakersfield.

- Tunnels within the Pacheco Pass segment will range from 1.5-2.0 miles to 13 miles with depths up to 1,500 feet. The color scheme on Authority imagery includes blue (aerial), green (at-grade), red (trench), black (tunnel), and gray (beyond the segment). Some initial pilot tunnels are already underway including a larger San Luis Reservoir tunnel and a smaller Santa Clara water tunnel.
- When the train is operational, there will be a limited maintenance window between 2:00 AM and 5:00 AM.
- The Bakersfield to Palmdale Section currently has multiple alternatives under study. This section involves two faults - White Wolf and Garlock. While the technical challenges resemble those of Pacheco Pass, the tunnels are typically a mile or less to avoid using a tunnel boring machine (TBM). Instead, it's a combination of tall bridges and tunnels, with the bridges serving as the access portals to the tunnels.
- The Palmdale to Burbank Section is the most complex in terms of tunneling with tunnels along the proposed alignments (SR 14, E1, E2) of up to 23 miles long and 2,700 feet deep. While geotechnical investigations are currently underway, environmental clearance is not projected until 2018.
- The immediate procurement plans are for an early train operator. A procurement for rolling stock will come later with design criteria currently under development.



**Janet Dawson, Consultant to Assemblymember Jim Frazier, Assembly
Transportation Committee (www.asm.ca.gov)**

- Three factors contributed to the successful passage of SB1: (1) “No Blank Checks” Initiative, (2) winter storms, and (3) the Oroville Dam Failure. ASCE’s messaging on the escalating cost of infrastructure neglect also helped passage. Had the vote been delayed to 2018, it may not have passed due to preoccupation with re-election. Short terms means that elected officials may not be around long enough to see the consequences of their decisions.
- SB1 lobbying was a 15-20 year effort resulting in the successful passage with profound implications on funding transportation infrastructure.
- SB1 barely scratches the surface of what is needed, but at least it gets the process started.
- ASCE may want to consider creating a position paper on the status of the state’s transportation network for release sometime between now and the release of the 2019 Statewide Infrastructure Report Card.
- Regarding the “Grand Challenge”, make sure that ASCE communicates that it is already doing the “Grand Challenge” by taking a system-wide approach to addressing congestion instead of fixing one choke point only to push the congestion “bottleneck” further downstream. Avoid simply evaluating projects based on “low bid”. Make sure that specialty experts are called in to address specific challenges versus highway engineers being viewed as the “cure all to end all” (no optometrist to look at tooth).



Susan Bransen, Executive Director, California Transportation Commission (CTC)
(www.catc.ca.gov)

- The CTC was formed in 1978 by AB 402 out of a need for a “single, unified California transportation policy” covering the responsibilities of the California Highway Commission, the State Transportation Board, the State Aeronautics Board, and the California Toll Bridge Authority. It consists of 11 voting and 2 ex-officio (non-voting) members. The CTC programs and allocates funds for highway, passenger rail, active transportation, aeronautics, and transit improvements statewide. The CTC advises CalSTA and the Legislature on policies and plans for the state’s transportation programs.
- SB1 impacts the State Highway Office of Planning and Preservation (SHOPP), the State Highway Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the Active Transportation Program (ATP). It’s no longer just about giving funds off the top. There is also accountability for how much was actually spent in order to receive additional funding.
- ASCE can help set targets, identify performance measures, and determine how assets are defined in the life cycle cost analysis within the Asset Management Plan per SB 46 (2014).
- CTC reports to the Legislature how well Caltrans is doing. Yet there are only 19 engineers within the CTC versus around 20,000 Caltrans personnel.
- While \$1.5B was cut from the STIP program last year, new projects will be added in this year as detailed in the upcoming CTC Meeting on June 28.
- The STIP is a 5-year program adopted biannually starting with an estimation of available revenue followed by a forecast of revenues projected to become available.
- The passage of SB1 means there is no longer a reason to believe that new projects will not be added. In fact, many of the projects put on hold could be restored to active status.
- While the ATP may not have a new Call For Projects, it will likely move the ready projects forward.
- SB1 calls for taking care of the system preservation and rehabilitation while minimizing future costs. ASCE can help determine how Caltrans is managing their work from a lifecycle cost perspective while encouraging elected officials with short terms to adopt a perspective that exceeds their time in office.
- ASCE and other associations can help serve as a team of experts to define the assets, determine how to take care of these assets, and formulate the targets. They can also help interpret legislation.
- If bills come up that are a concern to ASCE, they should bring it to the attention of the CTC.



Gyan Sinha, Darwin Vargas, Senator Josh Newman, Elizabeth Ruedas, Josue Vaglienty

Senator Josh Newman, California State Senate (www.sen.ca.gov)