



The California County Platform | Chapter 10
Transportation and Public Works

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Transportation infrastructure and multi-modal transportation choices are essential for the current and future well-being of the State of California. A balanced transportation system utilizes all modes of travel in a complementary manner to provide all users access and mobility options to safely move about their community. Counties also recognize that climate change and the release of greenhouse gasses (GHG) into the atmosphere have the potential to dramatically impact our environment, land use decisions, transportation networks, and the economy. Due to the relationship between climate change and other issues, all sections in this chapter should be viewed in conjunction with Chapter Fourteen, which outlines CSAC's climate change policy.

- 1) Transportation infrastructure investments should balance the competing needs of all segments of society and the economy with maximum coordination between all levels of government and reasonable amounts of free choice for the consumer.
- 2) Transportation systems must be fully integrated with planned land use; support the lifestyles desired by people; and be compatible with the environment by considering GHG emissions, air and noise pollution, aesthetics, ecological factors, cost benefit analyses, and energy goals.
- 3) Transportation systems should be designed to serve the travel demands and desires of all the people of the state and support a robust economy, recognizing the principles of local control and the unique characteristics of each area.
- 4) Local control recognizes that organizational and physical differences exist and governments should have flexibility to cooperatively develop systems by which services are provided and problems solved.
- 5) Counties support new transportation funding for existing maintenance of low Pavement Condition Index (PCI) local roads to bring them up to an adequate and safe level.

SECTION 2: BALANCED TRANSPORTATION POLICY

System Policy and Transportation Principles

It is of statewide interest to provide for a balanced, seamless, and multi-modal transportation system on a planned and coordinated manner, consistent with social, economic, political, and environmental goals of the state. The statewide network includes the local streets and roads, state highways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail, and ports. Rural and urban transportation needs must be balanced to build and operate a single transportation system.

While urban transportation systems support significant daily vehicle miles traveled and the transportation of millions of people, the rural transportation network connects communities and plays a critical role in the movement of goods for the entire state. The statewide transportation system should be an asset to present and future generations. It must consider and protect the natural and built environment and support economic development of the state.

- 1) Transportation systems must be regularly and consistently maintained to preserve the existing public infrastructure (current revenues are not keeping pace with needs of the local road or state highway or transit systems), reduce the future costs to tax-payers, and protect the environment. All users of the system have a responsibility to adequately invest in the transportation infrastructure that is critical to every-day life.
- 2) Repairs to local access roads that are damaged during emergency operations (e.g., during a fire or flood) should be eligible for reimbursement under the same programs as roads which are directly damaged by the event.
- 3) System process modifications are needed to expedite project delivery and minimize project cost.
- 4) Heavy vehicles impose exponentially greater wear and tear on roadways than lighter vehicles. Many locally-maintained roads may not have been designed to accommodate heavy vehicles. Proposed increases in weight limits to improve efficiency by reducing number of heavy vehicle trips required, or to meet other policy goals, should be balanced against the costs of additional wear and tear on roads, bridges, and highways.

Financing Policy and Revenue Principles

Transportation financing needs exceed existing and foreseeable revenues despite growing recognition of these needs at all levels of government. Further, traditional sources of revenue for transportation are declining as communities develop more sustainably and compactly to reduce vehicle miles traveled and GHG emissions to meet statewide climate change goals. Additional funding is required and efforts to obtain these sources should be supported. Also, any new sources of funding should produce enough revenue to respond significantly to transportation needs.

- 1) As the owner and operator of a significant portion of the local system, counties support continued direct funding to local governments for preservation and safety needs of that system.
- 2) Counties support regional approaches for transportation investment purposes for capital expansion projects of regional significance and local expansion and rehabilitation projects through regional transportation planning agencies.
- 3) Single transportation funds—comprised of state and federal subventions—should be available at each of the local, regional, and statewide levels for financing the

development, operation, and/or maintenance of highways, public transit, airports or any other modal system as determined by each area in accordance with local, regional, and statewide needs and goals.

- 4) The cooperative mechanisms established by counties and cities to meet multi-jurisdictional needs should be responsible for the financing, construction, operation, and maintenance of regional transportation systems utilizing—as appropriate—existing transportation agencies and districts.
- 5) Federal and state funds for safety and preservation purposes should be sent directly to applicable operational levels without involvement of any intermediate level of government. Pass-through and block grant funding concepts are highly desirable.
- 6) The cost of transportation facilities and services should be fairly shared by the users and also by indirect beneficiaries.
- 7) Transportation funding should be established so that annual revenues are predictable with reasonable certainty over several years to permit rational planning for wise expenditure of funds for each mode of transportation.
- 8) Financing should be based upon periodic deficiency reports by mode to permit adjustment of necessary funding levels. Additional elements such as constituent acceptance, federal legislative and/or administrative actions, programmatic flexibility, and cost benefit studies should be considered.
- 9) Efforts to obtain additional revenue should include an examination of administrative costs associated with project delivery and transportation programs.
- 10) Funding procedures should be specifically designed to reduce the cost of processing money and to expedite cash flow. Maximum use should be made of existing collection mechanisms when considering additional financing methods.
- 11) In the development of long-range financing plans and programs at all levels of government, there should be a realistic appreciation of limitations imposed by time, financing, availability, and the possibility of unforeseen changes in community interest.
- 12) Existing funding levels must be maintained with historical shares of current funding sources ensured for counties (e.g., state and federal gas tax increases).
- 13) Although significant transportation revenues are raised at the local level through the imposition of sales taxes, additional state and federal revenue sources are needed such as additional gas and sales taxes, congestion pricing, public-private partnerships, and user or transaction fees, to provide a diverse financing strategy.

- 14) Additional revenue raising authority at the local and regional level is needed as well as other strategies as determined by individual jurisdictions and regions.
- 15) Transportation revenues must be utilized for transportation purposes only and purposes for which they are dedicated. They should not be diverted to external demands and needs not directly related to transportation activities.
- 16) Revenue needed for operational deficits of transit systems should be found in increased user fees, implementation of operating efficiencies and/or new sources, rather than existing sources depended upon by other modes of transportation.
- 17) Future revenues must be directed to meet mobility needs efficiently and cost effectively with emphasis on current modal use and transportation choices for the public.

Government Relations Policy

The full partnership concept of intergovernmental relations is essential to achieve a balanced transportation system. Transportation decisions should be made comprehensively within the framework of clearly identified roles for each level of government without duplication of effort.

- 1) Counties and cities working through their regional or countywide transportation agencies, and in consultation with the State, should retain the ability to program and fund transportation projects that meet the needs of the region.
- 2) No county or city should be split by regional boundaries without the consent of that county or city.
- 3) Counties and cities in partnership with their regional and state government, should attempt to actively influence federal policies on transportation as part of the full partnership concept.

Management Policy

Effective transportation requires the definite assignment of responsibility for providing essential services including fixed areas of responsibility based upon service output.

- 1) Greater attention should be devoted to delivery and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in a cost-effective manner with flexibility in delivery methods and project management.
- 2) Special transportation districts should be evaluated and justified in accordance with local conditions and public needs.
- 3) The State Department of Transportation should be responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining a system of transportation corridors of

statewide significance and interest. Detailed procedures should be determined in concert with regional and local government.

- 4) Restrictive, categorical grant programs at the federal and state levels should be abandoned or minimized in favor of goal-oriented transportation programs which can be adjusted by effective management to best respond to the social and economic needs of individual communities.
- 5) Policies and procedures on the use of federal and state funds should be structured to eliminate unnecessary requirements, recognize the professional capabilities of local agencies, provide post-audit procedures, and permit the use of reasonable local standards.

SECTION 3: SPECIFIC MODAL TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

Aviation

- 1) Air transportation planning should be an integral part of overall planning effort and airports should be protected by adequate zoning and land use. Planning should also include consideration for helicopter and other short and vertical take-off aircraft.
- 2) State and federal airport planning participation should be limited to coordination of viable statewide and nationwide air transportation systems.
- 3) Local government should retain complete control of all airport facilities, including planning, construction, and operation.

Streets and Highways

The local street and road system, over 81-percent of the total maintained miles in the state, continues to play an important role in the mobility of Californians and critical for a vibrant economy. Further, local roads serve as the right-of-way for active transportation and transit. In a coordinated statewide transportation system, highways will continue to carry a great percentage of the goods and people transported within the state. Non-motorized transportation facilities, such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities also are proper elements of a balanced transportation system.

- 1) Counties and cities must work cooperatively with regional agencies, the state, and the federal government to ensure the local system is maintained in a cost-effective and efficient condition and that is fully integrated into the statewide transportation network.
- 2) A program of highway maintenance and improvement of this modal system must be continued in coordination with the development of other modal components. Efforts to

maximize utilization of transportation corridors for multi-purpose facilities should be supported.

- 3) Counties support efforts to design and build complete streets, ensuring that all roadway users – motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and users, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities – have safe access to meet the range of mobility needs.
- 4) Given that funding for basic maintenance of the existing system is severely limited, complete streets improvements should be financed through a combination of sources best suited to the needs of the community and should not be mandated through the use of existing funding sources.

Public Transit

- 1) Counties and cities should be responsible for local public transit systems utilizing existing transportation agencies and districts as appropriate.
- 2) Multi-jurisdictional public transit systems should be the responsibility of counties and cities acting through mechanisms that they establish for regional decision-making, utilizing existing transportation agencies and districts as appropriate.
- 3) The State should be responsible for transportation corridors of statewide significance, utilizing system concepts and procedures similar to those used for the state highway system. Contracts may be engaged with existing transit districts and public transportation agencies to carry out and discharge these state responsibilities.
- 4) Consideration of public transit and intercity rail should be an integral part of a local agency's overall planning effort and should maximize utilization of land for multi-purpose transportation corridors.
- 5) Public transit planning should include a continuing effort of identifying social, economic, and environmental requirements. Increasing Public Transit usage can assist the state in meeting its climate goals.

Rail

Railroads play a key role in a coordinated statewide transportation system. In many communities, they are central for intermodal transportation.

Rail carries a significant portion of goods and people within and out of the state. The continued support of rail systems will help balance the state's commuter, recreational, and long distance transportation needs. Support for a high-speed rail system in California is necessary for ease of future travel and for environmental purposes.

- 1) Rail should be considered, as appropriate, in any local agency's overall planning effort when rail is present or could be developed as part of a community.

- 2) Research and development of innovative and safe uses of rail lines should be encouraged.
- 3) Rail infrastructure is a relevant transportation technology that can assist the state in meeting its climate goals. Investments are needed to expand or restore service to meet passenger and commercial rail service demand.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Between 1994 (when the state gas excise tax was last increased) and 2017, when the Legislature passed SB 1 (Beall), California's population and travel increased, while revenues for maintenance and improvement of state highways and local roads failed to keep pace. In fact, by 2017 the value of the existing state gasoline tax had eroded to roughly half of its 1994 value due to inflation and improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency. SB 1 currently provides an ongoing source of approximately \$5 billion in revenue to invest in state highways, local roads, regional improvements, public transportation and active transportation and helps California to reverse the trend of deteriorating transportation infrastructure. However, due to the increased use of transportation modes that don't directly require fossil fuels (e.g., zero-emission vehicles, transit, and biking) revenues from SB 1 will inevitably decline. Current transportation trends and the state's current plans to reduce carbon emissions as a means to address climate change will require counties to examine new technologies and look for opportunities to diversify the revenue sources that support California's local transportation system.

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was a tremendous win for counties in California. IIJA included \$1.2 trillion in investments over five years from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 through FFY 2026, including \$550 billion in new spending on transportation, water and power infrastructure, and pollution cleanup, in addition to regular annual spending on infrastructure projects. CSAC is invested in working with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on the implementation of IIJA so that counties continue to get their fair share of the federal funding.

The 2021 California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment Report Update found that the condition of California's local streets and roads has improved 1 point since 2018. On a scale of zero (failed) to 100 (excellent), the statewide average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) is now 66 (still in the "At Risk" category).

However, 55 of 58 counties are either at risk or below, with the seven lowest being on average in the worst category of "Poor." The costs of poor road maintenance compound as condition decreases, moving repairs to full repaving and risking expensive catastrophic washouts in extreme weather events. While the state average condition is gradually rising, state intervention in the form of additional funding is needed for these most severely degraded roads within the state to ensure safe and reliable infrastructure for all residents.

Accordingly, it is vitally important to protect the \$1.5 billion share of local street and road formula funding from SB 1, which will be adjusted based on inflation and increasing vehicle values. Furthermore, CSAC must continue to advocate for streamlining administrative processes and environmental review and promoting efficiencies and sustainable practices that allow counties to maximize the benefits of transportation funding.

The citizens of California have invested significant resources in their transportation system. This \$3 trillion investment is the cornerstone of the state's commerce and economic competitiveness. Virtually all vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle trips originate and terminate on local streets and roads. Emergency response vehicles extensively use local roads to deliver public service. Public safety and mobility rely on a well-maintained transportation infrastructure. Protecting transportation funding is important to the economy and the economic resiliency of the state. Increased investment and incorporating mobility innovations in the transportation network is essential to stimulate the economy, improve economic competitiveness, and safeguard against loss of the public's existing \$3 trillion investment in our transportation system.

(The source of information for the statistics provided is from the Transportation California website and includes reports from the: California Transportation Commission (CTC), Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment.)