

Senate Bill 1098 LOSSAN Rail Corridor Working Group Report to the Legislature Consensus Recommendations Summary

Senate Bill (SB) 1098 Report to Legislature Consensus Recommendations – Policy Area (A):
Service Coordination and Disruption Reduction: Strategies to improve maintenance, reduce track closures, address resiliency vulnerabilities, and enhance on-time performance (OTP)

1. The corridor should develop a written fleet and asset management plan that aligns equipment, facilities, and infrastructure needs with funding. The plan should identify investment gaps with sufficient specificity to support grant applications and capital programming.
2. Require that the written fleet and facilities plan analyze opportunities for future shared equipment, maintenance and layover facilities, and processes that can drive efficiencies across all operators in the corridor. This should be complementary to the intercity fleet plan and layer analysis relevant to commuter rail operations where feasible.
3. Review state grant programs for opportunities to support State of Good Repair (SGR) rail projects where feasible. Program guidelines are encouraged to develop and incorporate specific considerations for SGR eligibility, emphasizing safety, reliability, and maintaining existing infrastructure.
4. Programs are encouraged to prioritize projects that include meaningful non-state local and federal funding contributions, while also recognizing circumstances where state investment may be necessary to address critical needs that exceed local fiscal capacity.
5. Grant program criteria should allow for the prioritization of projects that demonstrate significant non-state local/federal funding contributions, recognizing local commitment as an indicator of project readiness and shared investment.
6. In coordination with the LOSSAN Working Group, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and the California Coastal Commission should develop a cooperative agreement or MOU to identify where streamlining solutions for rail projects in the coastal zone can be identified and other solutions to assist in the delivery of rail projects. For example, if a federal nexus is identified project sponsors may coordinate with the Coastal Commission to determine whether the project can proceed through the federal consistency process in lieu of the traditional Coastal Development Permit (CDP). Additional clarity from the Coastal Commission on when each process applies would help project sponsors make informed decisions early and further improve permitting efficiency.
7. In coordination with the Coastal Commission, evaluate options to streamline and deliver projects that repair, maintain, or enhance existing passenger rail infrastructure, including existing protective measures such as seawalls. This could include clearly defined pathways for the repair or replacement of existing protective infrastructure where necessary to maintain safe and reliable rail operations, particularly in areas vulnerable to erosion and slope instability.

Develop a corridor-wide playbook that defines roles, decision thresholds, and timelines for agencies when bluff instability is detected. Include pre-defined triggers (e.g., erosion rates, track exposure, geotechnical warnings) to reduce ad hoc decision-making. This should include standardized communication protocols across agencies and to the public to avoid fragmented messaging during closures.

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closures, address resiliency vulnerabilities, and enhance OTP – CONTINUED***

8. The State may develop a state emergency response protocol that mirrors the state's established role in freeway incidents for emergency incidents that exceeds a defined threshold. This may include, but is not limited to, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) activating a standardized incident command structure for rail related emergencies, including rapid deployment of field crews, engineers, and operations coordination. Utilize pre-positioned emergency contracts and resources to immediately stabilize infrastructure and protect the rail right-of-way. Coordinate directly with regional partners with authority to elevate issues to the Caltrans Director or CalSTA Secretary of Transportation as appropriate.
9. The LOSSAN Working Group should establish a Vision Zero framework for rail within the LOSSAN rail corridor, with the explicit goal of eliminating passenger and vehicle strike incidents through a combination of data driven prioritization, targeted infrastructure investment, and coordinated interagency action.
10. Member agencies should compile and maintain a unified safety data set to identify and map high-risk locations with the greatest frequency and severity of incidents. Use that analysis to prioritize a ranked pipeline of targeted improvements: grade separations, enhanced barriers and fencing, upgraded crossing controls, and visibility and warning enhancements.
11. Implement ongoing performance monitoring to ensure continuous reduction of risk and measurable progress toward eliminating strikes corridor-wide.
12. Commission an independent study to look at the most cost-effective way to implement work windows for all services across the rail corridor.
13. Establish a corridor-wide standard for earlier and more consistent confirmation of AWWs, aligning toward 60–90-day confirmation where feasible, while continuing annual and long-range AWW planning to preserve operational flexibility.
14. Expand coordination within existing monthly coordination calls to prioritize alignment of work windows — shifting where possible to nighttime or weekday closures that minimize intercity passenger impacts.
15. Proactively consolidate maintenance activities across operators to reduce the frequency and overlap of disruptions.
16. Leverage the Rail Fleet Consortium being led by the Caltrans Division of Rail as a primary vehicle for coordination. Use this venue to explore joint procurements and service contracting to attract more bidders and aggregate buying power statewide — broadening vendor competition, reducing unit costs, improving equipment interoperability, and strengthening overall fleet reliability and availability.

Senate Bill 1098 LOSSAN Rail Corridor Working Group Report to the Legislature Consensus Recommendations Summary

SB 1098 Report to Legislature Consensus Recommendations – Policy Area (B): *Alternative management and operations models or structures that improve intercity and regional rail services.*

17. Rather than creating a new layer of coordination by formalizing the SB 1098 Working Group, use existing avenues to formalize this coordination. Specifically, the working group recommends using the Rail Leadership Group for strategic leadership engagement and the LOSSAN Technical Advisory Committee as a staff led forum to advance priorities established by the Leadership Group.
18. Encourage corridor operators to align schedule changes during the same periods of the year, with April and October identified as preferred implementation windows, while preserving flexibility for ad hoc changes to account for unanticipated extenuating circumstances. The goal is predictability for passengers and connecting services without creating an inflexible mandate that fails to account for operational realities.
19. Require regular updates and revisions to the LOSSAN schedule optimization study on a fixed cadence established in advance, to ensure that operations across corridor services are continually optimized.
20. In coordination with CalSTA and the Caltrans Division of Rail, designate a primary host railroad liaison and negotiator. This role may lead a coordinated freight railroad sub working group so that the LOSSAN rail corridor can speak with one voice on freight issues relevant to all member agencies, with a specific focus on Amtrak's federal statutory rights and how those rights can be more effectively leveraged across the rail corridor and statewide.

SB 1098 Report to Legislature Consensus Recommendations – Policy Area (C): *Changes to state statutes, rules, or funding necessary to improve services in the rail corridor.*

21. Define review deadlines for agency comments and approvals on passenger rail projects subject to CEQA and create a formal conflict resolution protocol applicable when multiple jurisdictions impose conflicting requirements. Clear timelines and a defined escalation pathway may reduce the ad hoc nature of multi-agency review coordination and provide project sponsors with greater certainty in scheduling environmental clearance.
22. Consider making permanent the CEQA streamlining judicial review provisions for certain transportation-related projects introduced through SB 149 (Statutes of 2023), once all ten authorized letters have been issued and program outcomes have been evaluated. If evaluation demonstrates that the streamlined process delivers timely and defensible environmental review, the Legislature should consider extending those provisions to provide a durable tool for accelerating high-priority passenger rail investments.
23. Clarify CEQA and add the following to the existing statutory exemption: "Activities by an rail carrier or on behalf of a rail carrier under the authority of the Surface Transportation Board for the 'construction, acquisition, operation, abandonment, or discontinuance of spur, industrial, team switching, or sidetracks, or facilities, even if the tracks are located, or intended to be located, entirely in one State.'"

**Senate Bill 1098 LOSSAN Rail Corridor Working
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Recommendations Summary**

SB 1098 Report to Legislature Consensus Recommendations – Policy Area (C): *Changes to state statutes, rules, or funding necessary to improve services in the rail corridor* – CONTINUED

24. Consistent with approved recommendations in the Transit Transformation Task force:
- a. Review opportunities to modernize the Transportation Development Act (TDA) by removing the farebox recovery ratio penalty and developing new metrics and performance measures that replace the farebox recovery penalty, which is currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but is set to resume beginning in fiscal year 2027.
 - b. Review opportunities to develop new metrics and performance measures that replace the farebox recovery penalty and update these measures on a regular cadence.
 - c. Review opportunities to update other formulaic funding programs (i.e., LCTOP, SGR) to align with revisions to TDA reporting requirements and incentives.
25. Request Caltrans to provide greater technical assistance for intercity rail modeling in RTP development. For example, the Pacific Surfliner traverses the jurisdictions of six Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), each of which independently develop its own travel demand models. These models are not necessarily calibrated to a common standard for intercity rail and may not share consistent assumptions. As a result, the benefits tied to intercity rail are likely being understated.
26. Request Caltrans to develop standardized technical guidance for how intercity passenger rail services that span multiple regions should be modeled in travel demand models used in RTPs.
27. Statewide guidance should be issued to establish a common framework for how passenger rail is described and coordinated in RTPs.
28. This may include: expectations for baseline documentation of existing and planned rail services, key corridor characteristics, and coordination with operators and state agencies, as well as clarifying roles when corridors span multiple MPOs.
29. Statewide guidance should be issued for how MPOs should reference corridor-level resiliency needs, such as common data sources, definitions, and high-level assessment expectations.
30. Align guidance with existing state resilience funding programs to help ensure that identified needs can more easily move from planning into project development

SB 1098 Report to Legislature Consensus Recommendations – Policy Area (D): *Coordination of Planning and Project Development through the Federal Corridor Identification and Development Program*

31. Acknowledging that Caltrans serves as the lead agency and primary coordinator for California's participation in the Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP), LOSSAN member agencies and the LOSSAN Agency will support and actively engage in the CIDP process by providing timely data, participating in federally required planning activities, and coordinating local project development work with the state-led corridor planning effort.

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32. This approach is consistent with the Federal Railroad Administrations' (FRA) expectations for state rail authority involvement and positions California to speak with a unified voice in federal planning processes. Full LOSSAN rail corridor participation will strengthen the quality and credibility of the corridors selected for CIDP participation and improve the competitiveness of projects that emerge from the process for federal capital funding.
33. To the extent possible, CalSTA and Caltrans should endeavor to align state grant programs, including TIRCP, TCEP, and SCCP, with the project priorities established through the CIDP process. Inclusion of projects on the CIDP capital project list should be an explicit selection consideration in grant evaluations, recognizing that CIDP inclusion reflects a rigorous, federally coordinated prioritization process.
34. This approach reinforces the integrity and utility of the CIDP project list as a planning tool and positions LOSSAN rail corridor projects to present a coherent funding strategy that pairs state investment with competitive federal 21 applications under programs such as CRISI, the Federal-State Partnership Program, and other federal funding opportunities.
35. The LOSSAN JPA, in coordination with Caltrans, should establish a standing interagency coordination structure specifically organized around Step 2 CIDP milestones and deliverables. This structure should provide regular touchpoints aligned with FRA's staged development process, with clear expectations for member agency participation and data contribution at each stage.
36. Structured milestone coordination reduces the risk of gaps in corridor-level data submissions, improves the quality of FRA deliverables, and builds institutional readiness for the capital project development that follows CIDP selection.
37. CalSTA, Caltrans, and the LOSSAN member agencies should actively leverage California's participation in the CIDP as a foundation for federal legislative and policy advocacy on behalf of the LOSSAN rail corridor. Corridors with formal CIDP status occupy a recognized position within FRA's national passenger rail framework, and that status should be used strategically in engagements with FRA leadership, the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, and California's congressional delegation.
38. Advocacy efforts should connect corridor-specific investment needs to national policy priorities and should seek to advance LOSSAN rail corridor projects in FRA budget discussions and competitive program design.