

Investing in California Small Businesses

SMALL BUSINESS NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 9: ISSUE 3

AUGUST 2021



Small Business Program

The Authority is committed to small businesses playing a major role in building the statewide high-speed rail system. The Small Business Program has an aggressive 30 percent goal for small business participation including Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) and Micro-Business (MB).



Investing in California Small Business

**SMALL BUSINESS NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 9 • ISSUE 3
AUGUST 2021**

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To access and download more information pertaining to the small business program, visit the Small Business Resources webpage at https://hsr.ca.gov/small_business/

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Lean Into the Light at the End of the Tunnel

No doubt about it, the COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 a very tough year. This year, as we watch the country slowly open up and try to return to normal, the California High-Speed Rail Authority can say it sees the light at the end of the tunnel. You may even hear some cheering coming from our direction.

We're happy on a number of fronts. Let's start with the Biden [Administration restoring \\$929 million in grant funding](#) that had been canceled by the Trump Administration. That's huge!

The high-speed rail project received more national attention when a coalition of federal lawmakers led by U.S. Representatives Seth Moulton, Jim Costa, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senators Ed Markey and Kirsten Gillibrand wrote to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Congressional leaders. [The letter](#) asked for high-speed rail funding to be included in a proposed infrastructure package. The letter, which laid out the benefits of high-speed rail, was cosigned by 75 other members of Congress.

The good news doesn't stop there, we also received just shy of \$229 million from the May Cap-and-Trade auction, the program that allows companies to pay for pollution permits. That's the largest amount of money we've ever received from the auction.

The money will be used to complete current construction on 119 miles of high-speed rail in the Central Valley between Madera and Bakersfield. It will also go towards environmentally clearing the rest of Phase 1 of our project from San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim.

We have created more than 5,500 good-paying construction jobs and we're averaging over 1,100 workers a day on 35 active

"We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We're leaning into the light. Before we know it, it will be the headlight on a high-speed rail train zipping through the Central Valley."

Ashley Mistler
Small Business Advocate
California High-Speed Rail Authority

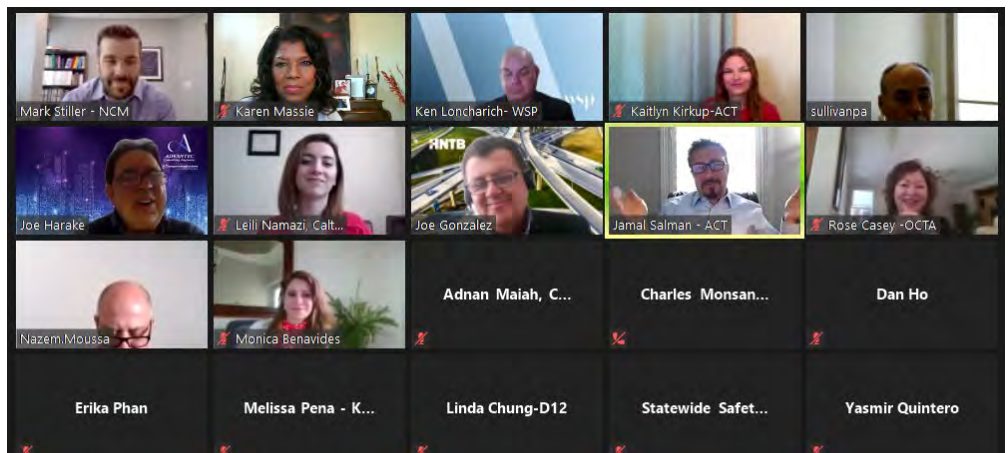
construction sites in the Central Valley. The money will mean more jobs and more work for small businesses.

Currently, we have 626 small businesses working on high-speed rail. In the quest to fulfill the need for more small businesses, we have been extremely busy in the last three months participating in virtual conferences.

We attended the Southern California Calmentor spring event for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) where small business participants heard from companies that are prime contractors on the high-speed rail project. Kleinfelder, an engineering and construction management firm, handed out a graduation certificate to a small business it's been mentoring. WSP, our Rail Delivery Partner, was on the line and so was Arcadis, the project and construction management team for Construction Package 2-3 (CP 2-3) in the Central Valley. We're proud to say Arcadis was tapped by Calmentor as the Firm of the Year.

In June, we hosted a Meet the Primes event for California Rail Builders, the design builder for Construction Package 4 (CP 4). About 40 people listened as Small Business Liaison Amanda Craft and Project Controls Manager Ramon Alonso explained CP 4 is 90% finished, but they still need small businesses to do all kinds of work. To date, CP 4 has awarded \$110 million to small businesses.

We also hosted a prebid for a [Request for Qualifications](#) for the historic train



In April, Information Officer Karen Massie participated in a Calmentor event hosted by the California Department of Transportation. She shared information about upcoming opportunities like the Track and System contract and how small businesses can get involved in the high-speed rail project. More than 120 people attended the event.



station in downtown Fresno that will be incorporated in to the future high-speed rail station. Check out the story about our need for small businesses to help out with design services for seismic and accessibility renovations for the [Southern Pacific Railroad Depot](#), which played a crucial role in the growth of Fresno in the late 1800s.

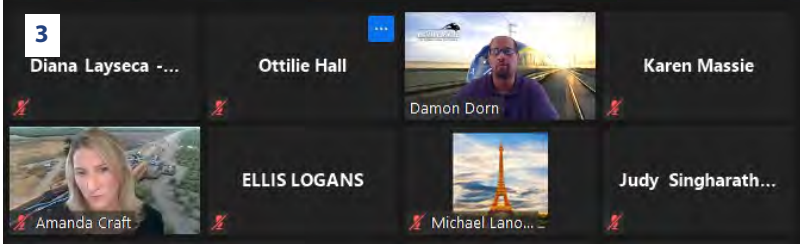
The other important procurement we're working on is the [Program Delivery Support](#) contract. We're going to do something a little different with this procurement. Before we issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), we're asking the industry to answer some questions about best way to package the contract. We want to make sure bidding and working on the contract doesn't present unnecessary challenges and barriers to prime contractors and small businesses. Check out the contract's webpage to see questions we're submitting to the industry.

Another grade separation is finished along the Central Valley alignment. Crews have put the final touches on the South Avenue grade separation. Located in Fresno County between Cedar and Maple Avenues, the overpass spans more than 390 feet. It's designed to take traffic over the existing BNSF and future high-speed rail lines.

We're also thumping our chests because, the [San Joaquin River Viaduct was selected as the Structure Project of the Year](#) by the California Transportation Foundation. The announcement came during the foundation's 32nd Annual Transportation Awards ceremony recognizing California transportation achievement in 2020. You can [check out the massive structure](#) we've completed that will serve as high-speed rail's northern gateway into Fresno.

So, we're celebrating a lot of good news. As I said earlier, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We're leaning into the light. Before we know it, it will be the headlight on a high-speed rail train zipping through the Central Valley.

Ashley Mistler



Small Business Events

*Subject to change

August 11, 2021
Business Advisory Council
 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 Webcast Meeting Online

August 18-19, 2021
California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
 Time: TBD
 Webcast Meeting Online

September 23, 2021
California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
 Time: TBD
 Webcast Meeting Online

October 21, 2021
California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
 Time: TBD
 Webcast Meeting Online

November 10, 2021
Business Advisory Council
 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 Webcast Meeting Online

November 18, 2021
California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
 Time: TBD
 Webcast Meeting Online

December 16, 2021
California High-Speed Rail Authority Board Meeting
 Time: TBD
 Webcast Meeting Online



September 2, 2021
[Credit as an Asset](#)
 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
 Online Workshop

Tired of struggling with a bad credit score? Good credit scores can jumpstart your business by giving you negotiating power, lower interest rates and easier access to money. Learn how to build your credit score or rebuild your credit rating. Offered by the Women's Business Centers, a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration. This program is free. (Photo courtesy of Kampus Production from Pexels)



August 18, 2021
[California Small Business Day](#)
 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 Sheraton Grand Ballroom
 1230 J Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814

California Senate President pro Tem Toni Atkins will be a featured speaker at this year's California Small Business Day. Join the excitement as small businesses network with each other and learn about upcoming contract opportunities with state agencies and companies that offer a variety of goods and services. We'll also recognize the contributions of firms tapped as the Small Business of the Year in California's Senate and Assembly Districts. Hosted by the [California Small Business Association](#)

*Some photos taken prior to COVID-19 social distancing requirements



November 2, 2021
[Managing Disputes in Federal Government Contracts](#)
 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
 Online Webinar

The honeymoon is over, and a disagreement has popped up with your government contract. This workshop will explore the dispute clause, a clause that's part of every government contract. Find out what the clause says and about rights and responsibilities for your company and the government. This free workshop is hosted by the [Indian Dispute Resolution Services \(IDRS\) Acorn Project](#). (Photo courtesy of IDRS Acorn Project)

Did You Know?

The California High-Speed Rail Authority constantly gets questions about how much money it spends on contracts. Some of our Central Valley construction contracts are worth more than a billion dollars. Now you can find that information by going to the Authority's [Info Center](#) on the Small Business Program page.

There you will find a link to [Cal eProcure, a data transparency tool](#) set up by [the California Department of General Services \(DGS\)](#) in collaboration with the Financial Information System for California (Fi\$Cal), the State's accounting budget cash management and Procurement IT system. Users can not only see Authority contracts and how much we paid for goods and services, they can see contracts for all California state agencies.

"This data tool provides more transparency about what the Authority is doing with taxpayer dollars as it builds the nation's first high-speed rail project," explained Small Business Advocate Ashley Mistler. "It's an easy way for bidders, suppliers, state agencies and the public to look up and stay informed about our contract information."

Each week, the DGS eProcurement Unit monitors information tracked by the [State Contract & Procurement Registration System and the California State Contracts Register](#). That data identifies suppliers and bidders who have done business with the State. It also shows purchases, contracts and historical purchasing data. Users can also get information about upcoming bidding events and past events. Best of all, the information is free and doesn't require the user to have a password to login.

For more information, check out the data transparency tool at the [Purchases, Contracts, and Events](#) section of the Small Business Info Center.

ACE Train On Fast Track to Central Valley: The [Altamont Corridor Express \(ACE\)](#) could be ready to stop in Merced by 2025 according to draft environmental documents released in April. Officials said construction slated to start in 2022 would bring a station and maintenance facility to downtown Merced along with much-needed jobs. ACE will connect Central Valley residents to more jobs in the San Francisco Bay Area. By 2029, officials want ACE to connect with the high-speed rail line from Merced to Bakersfield. Fuel taxes are funding grants worth \$900 million to pay for the [ACE extension and more Amtrak trains between Stockton and Sacramento](#). (Photo courtesy of ACE)



Contract Adds Spark to Texas High-Speed Rail Plans: A new contract will construct core electrical systems for the high-speed rail line between Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston. [Texas Central Railroad](#) signed the \$1.6 billion procurement with Kiewit Infrastructure South and its affiliate Mass Electric Construction in May. The contract calls for installation of traction power, signaling and communications equipment that allows tracks, trains and operators to communicate with one another and prevent accidents. The equipment is also a key component of the Japanese N700S Shinkansen trains that officials want to deploy in Texas. (Photo courtesy of Texas Central Railroad)

Federal Funding Restored to High-Speed Rail

The Biden Administration has given California's high-speed rail project a major boost by restoring nearly \$1 billion in federal funding. In June, the State of California and U.S. Department of Transportation inked [an agreement](#) to return federal grant funds that were de-obligated by the Trump Administration in 2019.

Governor Gavin Newsom praised the deal. "[The] action by the federal government is further proof that California and the Biden-Harris Administration share a common vision – clean, electrified transportation that will serve generations to come," said Newsom.

"Restoring nearly \$929 million in grant funding back to California's High-Speed Rail project will continue to spur job creation, advance the project and move the state one step closer to getting trains running in California as soon as possible."

The deal comes two years after the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that it intended to cancel the grant, and the State of California responded by filing a legal challenge. In March, negotiations began to restore the funds.

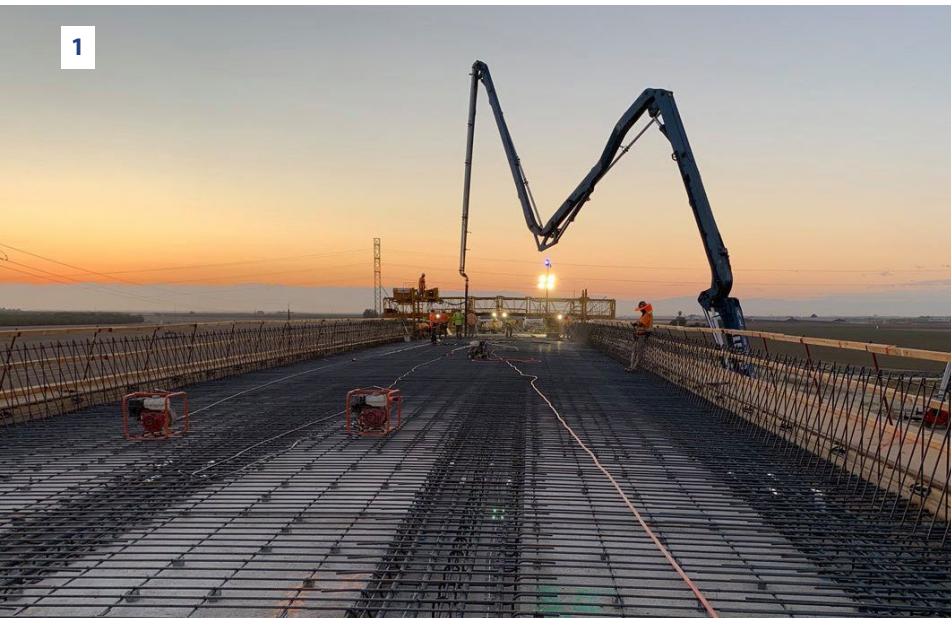
The money will be used to put people to work on construction and to finish

environmental clearance for all of Phase 1 of high-speed rail from San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim.

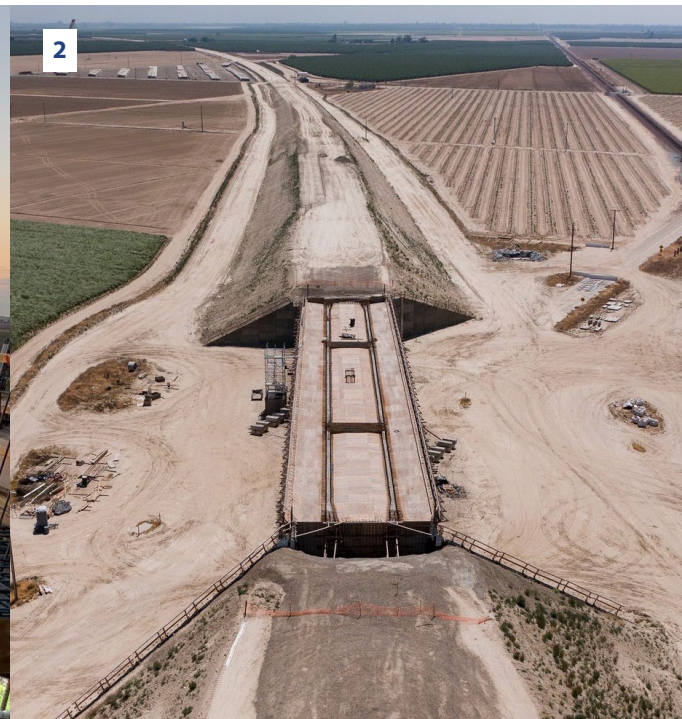
"We appreciate the FRA's expression of confidence that we are getting this project on the right track," added California High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Brian Kelly. "Let's continue the work of creating jobs and building the nation's first truly high-speed rail project right here in California."

The average of workers dispatched to 35 heavy construction sites has reached as high as 1,200 a day along 119 miles of high-speed rail in the Central Valley.

Karen Massie



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2



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1. In June, crews were up before dawn to place 207 cubic yards of concrete to form the deck of the superstructure for the Jackson Avenue overcrossing located between State Route 43 and Seventh Avenue in Kings County. It's designed to take traffic over future high-speed rail lines.

2. Construction crews are working on the Peach Avenue overcrossing, a part of the Conejo Viaduct complex west of State Route 43 in Fresno County. When complete the viaduct will carry high-speed trains over the BNSF rail line, Conejo and Peach avenues.

3. The high-speed rail project is providing good-paying jobs for construction workers. Up to 1,200 workers a day have been dispatched to more than 30 construction sites in the Central Valley. Most of the workers live in the area.

High-Speed Rail Helps Small Business Survive Pandemic

For 31 years, the husband-and-wife team of Shannon and Cosette Conaway supported each other through education and business endeavors. After initially meeting in high school in 1985, they reconnected after Shannon, a third-generation military man, served in the California Army National Guard and helped restore peace during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Shannon earned a Surveying Engineering Degree at California State University, Fresno and Cosette earned a Business Degree in Finance at California State University, Sacramento.

While working for others, Shannon always had a vision. He said, "I wanted to create a business environment where individuals could join a team that supports them through training, work experience and mentorship." He and Cosette believed they could offer jobs and boost the number of skilled land surveyors if they opened a new company. That opportunity came in March 2019, when

they launched [Conaway Geomatics \(CG\)](#), a Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) headquartered in Placentia, just northeast of Anaheim.

"I can honestly say that our company is in business today because of the opportunity to work on the California high-speed rail project."

Shannon Conaway
Co-founder
Conaway Geomatics

With Shannon as the chief executive officer and Cosette as chief financial officer, the full-service geospatial firm was rolling along offering clients consulting, land surveying and precision Geographic Information System (GIS) services. A year later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the amount of work they were doing plummeted.

"The first three months of the pandemic were pretty scary," Shannon recalled. "We had two large Los Angeles Metro projects that were delayed indefinitely. Our new business did not have a large backlog of work and the economic fallout from the virus was uncertain at best. We were concerned for the safety and well-being of our employees, along with our ability to maintain a viable company."

Worried about cutting staff hours or shutting down completely, the Conaways worked quickly to solve problems, just like they had done when they first opened their business. "In April, we were able to secure



1. Conaway Geomatics (CG) owners, Shannon and Cosette Conaway (first and second row, right), worried about their company's survival when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. They said getting a contract to work on the high-speed rail project allowed them to keep all of their staff on full time.

2. CG surveys land, pipelines, tanks and more for clients. The firm also offers precision Geographic Information System (GIS) services, robotic stations, LiDAR scanning, drones, automated processing and computer-aided design (CAD).



some Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding from the federal government,” Shannon explained. “That allowed us to retain our staff, provide them additional training, improve our internal processes/procedures and expand into new markets.”

They also focused on the future, and in May 2020, [Towill, Inc.](#) contacted them and asked for support with the California high-speed rail project. Shannon said, “Thankfully, Towill’s ability to add us to their team provided consistent work that allowed us to keep all our staff on as full-time employees.”

CG was tasked with land acquisition support services. It included creating plat and legal reports that finalize the transfer of ownership for land acquired by the California High-Speed Rail Authority. The process also grants access rights to utilities, irrigation districts and municipalities so their facilities can traverse the high-speed rail right-of-way.

For other clients, including public utilities, transportation agencies, California state departments and federal programs, CG provides robotic stations, LiDAR scanning, drones, automated processing and computer-aided design (CAD). The company focuses on solutions that improve quality, safety, schedule and costs for all clients.

But Shannon points to the Authority for helping him and his wife keep the firm’s lights on. By July 2020, the high-speed rail project was their biggest client.

“We are incredibly thankful for working on the California high-speed rail project,” Shannon declared. “I can honestly say that our company is in business today because of the opportunity to work on the California high-speed rail project.”

Crystal Royval

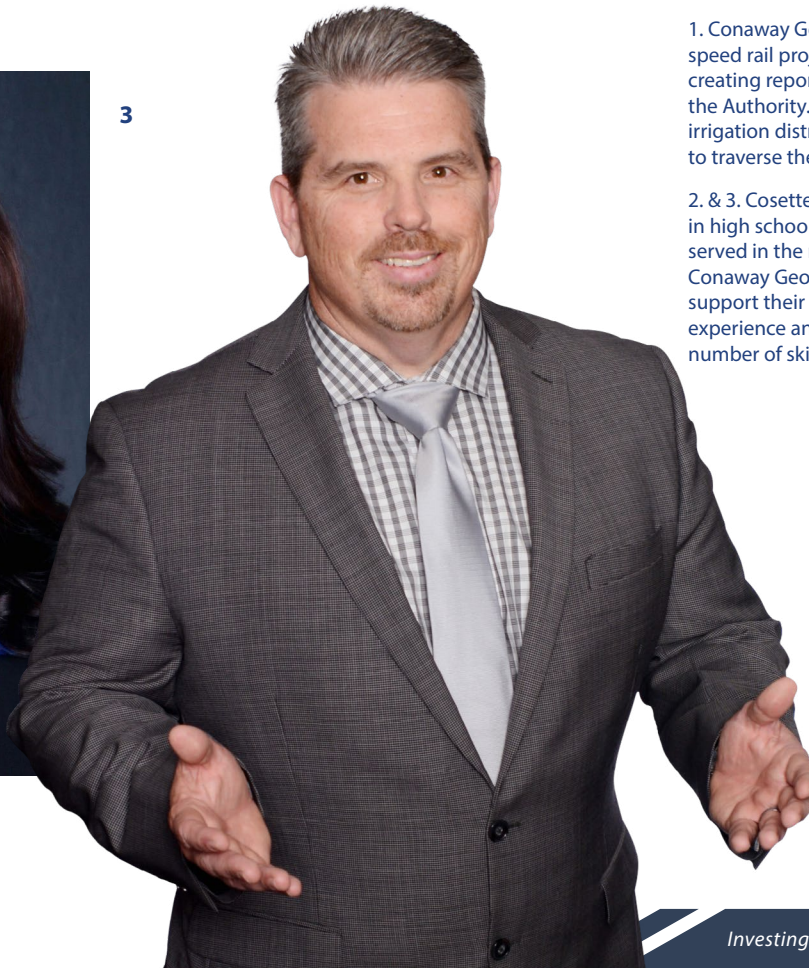


1. Conaway Geomatics is helping the high-speed rail project with land acquisition by creating reports that transfer land ownership to the Authority. The process also allows utilities, irrigation districts and municipalities the right to traverse the high-speed rail alignment.

2. & 3. Cosette and Shannon Conaway met in high school and married after Shannon served in the military. In 2019, they opened Conaway Geomatics. They said they wanted to support their employees through training, work experience and mentorship as well as boost the number of skilled land surveyors.



3



Environmental Lab Cultivates Community

Fashioned from sections of metal tubing entangled with rubber hoses, a leaning tower emits a steady drone. Technicians skillfully tend to the hydraulic drilling machine, withdrawing a core sample from deep underground.

The samples they gather will help engineers on the high-speed rail project determine if the soil is suitable for construction. The results will also identify toxins and contaminants like lead, arsenic and mercury that may be hazardous to people and wildlife.

Torrent Laboratory, Inc., an environmental testing lab in Milpitas in California's Silicon Valley, provides a broad range of soil testing and other services for transportation agencies.

Mukesh Jani founded the company with a credit card and a conviction. After emigrating from India, he worked as a lab chemist, soon becoming a process engineer and eventually managing a wastewater treatment plant. "To start a lab was a natural thing to do," he explained, "I saw that there was a market for



"At the end of the day, everybody in this industry knows that it's not about the money, it's about the environment."

Mukesh Jani
Company Founder
Torrent Laboratory, Inc.

this kind of facility, particularly for companies that could provide quick-turn services to clients."

The company was the first lab in the San Francisco Bay Area to offer air analysis. "Initially, we offered wastewater and stormwater services to small industrial clients," noted Mukesh. "We started expanding into soil testing and then into full-service organic testing."

Mukesh credits his wife with the company's success. He said, "She's my boss, at home and work." Falguni Jani became employee number two soon after the company formed. As chief financial officer, she led strategic initiatives that transformed a modest 150-square-foot space into a nearly 10,000-square-foot facility.

Since Mukesh's original idea in 1993, Torrent has flourished and become a premier testing facility. The company holds notable certifications from the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC), State of California, U.S. Department of Defense and U. S. Department of Energy.



1



2

1. Torrent Laboratory, headquartered in Milpitas, was founded by Mukesh Jani in 1993. Today, the firm employs 35 people and runs its own environmental testing lab. The company is pulling core samples from deep underground for the high-speed rail project to determine if the ground is suitable for construction.

2. A Torrent Laboratory chemist conducts tests for dioxin compounds, some of the most toxic substances in the world. Whether the firm's experts collect samples or clients send them in, Torrent promises a fast turnaround for test results.



Currently, Torrent employs 35 people, "Most are long-term employees. Without them, we couldn't function," Mukesh said. "You do the work to bring projects to life. In the process, you support people and people's lives." Beaming with pride, he shared stories about people who joined the company more than 18 years ago and now have children who are attending college. He added, "It's a great thing to see!"

Every year, the lab invites high school students to work on intern projects and coordinates with City College of San Francisco to host students from Tokyo. Mukesh sponsors these efforts, "so young people can learn about chemistry and be inspired!"

"We continuously support our community," he continued. Organizations where sustainability is a priority, such as Habitat for Humanity, receive services at no cost.

Torrent Laboratory, Inc. is passionate about its work and strives to improve the quality of life for everyone. Mukesh concluded, "At the end of the day, everybody in this industry knows that it's not about the money, it's about the environment."

Anthony Lopez

1. Two chemists work in a semi-volatile organic lab owned by Torrent Laboratory. Owner Makesh Jani is proud of his employees. Many have worked for him for more than 18 years and some have children attending college. He said, "You do the work to bring projects to life. In the process, you support people and people's lives."

2. Torrent Laboratory chemists not only test the ground to see if it's suitable for construction, they can also identify toxins and contaminants like lead, arsenic and mercury. Those substances may be hazardous to people and wildlife.

3. Torrent Laboratory conducts a broad range of soil, water, air testing and other services for transportation, government agencies and other clients. Owner Makesh Jani said his testing facility was the first one in the San Francisco Bay Area to offer air analysis.



Catrina Blair Receives Statewide Recognition

In April, Katrina Blair, the Authority's Chief of the Process and Program Development Branch and former Small Business Advocate, received the Angel Carrera Leadership Award, a [State Agency Recognition Award \(SARA\)](#), handed out by the Department of General Services (DGS). This award was recently established in memory of Angel Carrera, Jr., former Chief of the Certification and Outreach Branch at DGS, who passed away in 2019. The award recognizes and celebrates a leader in state procurement who, like Angel, supports small businesses and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBEs) in state procurement and is a tremendous leader.

During an [online ceremony](#), Angela Shell, Chief Procurement Officer for the State of California and Deputy Director of the Procurement Division at DGS, presented the award. As outlined in the award nomination, Katrina's dedication to the Authority's Small Business program has included active participation in small business outreach events, chairing the Authority's Business Advisory Council (BAC) quarterly meetings and empowering her team to participate in monthly focus group meetings with other state and local agencies using the latest technology available.

Catrina worked for Angel during her time in the Contract Compliance Unit at Caltrans, and then later while working at DGS. He was supportive of her move to come over to the Authority.

"He was not just my manager, but I also considered him a friend," noted Katrina, "which made it easy to speak to him candidly about our program and continuous improvement in our section. He respected my opinion, even when he didn't agree."



"Angel had a great sense of humor and was very much into team building, and bonding over music and food. It was an honor to receive the award in his name."

Catrina Blair

Chief, Process and Program Development
California High-Speed Rail Authority

Catrina shared some of the fun she had with Angel, and how she used to tease him about coming to check on the team. "He thought it was the funniest thing that we always knew he was approaching by the fast and heavy steps he would take," she recalled. "He actually had me share this at an All Staff meeting and everyone thanked me for the tip."

Having spent so much time working with Angel, Katrina recognized how special it was to receive this award on many levels. "Angel had a great sense of humor and was very

much into team building and bonding over music and food. It was an honor to receive the award in his name."

The Angel Carrera Leadership award is just one of many SARA awards handed out each year by DGS to honor individuals, state departments, Small Businesses (SB) and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE) for outstanding achievements.

Brett Salmi



1. & 2. Katrina Blair, the Authority's Chief of the Process and Program Development Branch and former Small Business Advocate, received the Angel Carrera Leadership Award, a State Agency Recognition Award, in April. She was honored for her dedication to the Authority's Small Business Program.

*Some photos taken prior to COVID-19 social distancing requirements

San Joaquin River Viaduct Recognized as Structure of the Year

With 119 miles of construction underway, California's high-speed rail project continues to make progress in the Central Valley. Among the construction sites and structures, there is one that has gained a lot of attention for its size and unique design. The [San Joaquin River Viaduct was recognized as Structure of the Year](#) at the [32nd Annual California Transportation Foundation Awards](#), a charitable organization dedicated to supporting the transportation industry in California.

Spanning across the San Joaquin River—the viaduct can be seen from miles away by travelers driving through the Central Valley.

Standing more than 4,000 feet long with its signature arches, it's no wonder it was awarded Structure of the Year.

The San Joaquin River Viaduct and Pergola stands out as one of the highlights of infrastructure in California's Central Valley. Its unique arches represent the northern gateway into the city of Fresno and features a pergola that will allow high-speed trains to safely cross over the top of Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

Recently, California Governor Gavin Newsom walked across the structure and showed public support of the high-speed rail program as he stood atop the structure.

We thank the hundreds of workers that have worked tirelessly to complete the structure. We couldn't do it without you!

Sofia Gutierrez

1, 2, & 3. The San Joaquin River Viaduct was recognized as Structure of the Year at the 32nd Annual California Transportation Foundation Awards, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting the transportation industry in California. Governor Gavin Newsom was impressed by the size of the structure when he visited it earlier this year. The viaduct, with its unique arches and pergola, is 4,700 feet long and spans the San Joaquin River and Union Pacific tracks north of Fresno.



Moving Forward with Environmental Clearance Beyond the Central Valley

Since last year, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has made significant progress in completing the environmental documents that identify the final route of the high-speed rail line from San Francisco to the Los Angeles/Anaheim area. In September 2020, we reached a major milestone when the Board of Directors approved the final route for the [Central Valley “Wye”](#), which serves as the junction for the high-speed rail system connecting San Jose to Fresno, San Jose to Merced, and Merced to Fresno. With the completion of this document, we have cleared the full route from Merced to Bakersfield to begin pre-construction work.

“The completion of the Wye documents represented a major milestone for high-speed rail with the 171-mile stretch between Merced and Bakersfield now environmentally cleared, we are paving the way for future construction,” said CEO Brian Kelly.

The next big milestone came in June when we issued the final [Bakersfield to Palmdale Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement \(EIR/EIS\)](#), which represents our first project section cleared from outside of the Central Valley. This project section extends from the Bakersfield station and ends at the [Palmdale Transportation Center](#), which is also the location of the future connection to the Brightline West high-speed rail service to Las Vegas. The Authority’s Board of Directors will consider adopting the final document and hear public comment at their two-day board meeting on August 18 and 19.

Following the Bakersfield to Palmdale document, the final [Burbank to Los Angeles](#), [San Jose to Merced](#), [San Francisco to San Jose](#) and draft [Palmdale to Burbank](#) and [Los Angeles to Anaheim](#) environmental documents will be released in the next four to eight months.

“While we continue to build high-speed rail in the Central Valley, the completion of these documents shows that we are serious about looking forward to moving from the cities of the Central Valley to the Bay Area and Southern California,” said CEO Kelly. “We continue to work closely with the Biden-Harris Administration, Congress, California Legislature and our regional partners to make it happen.”

Throughout this process, we have continued to adjust to the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic’s effect on how we conduct public outreach. Over the last 18 months, we have hosted dozens of virtual and telephone open houses and meetings to make sure the public has an opportunity to view the documents, speak with the experts, and provide their feedback on the routes and potential impacts to their communities. As more opportunities come up to meet in person, we will continue to look for new ways to connect with Californians – be it virtually or face-to-face.

Max Thogmartin/Annie Parker



1. An artist’s rendering of a high-speed rail station. Planned with sustainability and functionality in mind, these stations may expand over time creating community hubs.



2. The proposed high-speed rail station at the Palmdale Transportation Center will also connect to Metrolink, buses and possibly to the high-speed rail line linking California to Las Vegas.

Program Delivery Support Contract

The California High-Speed Rail Authority plans to issue a [Request for Qualifications \(RFQ\)](#) to procure a Program Delivery Support contract in September. The current contract with our Rail Delivery Partner is expiring, so we're seeking a new contract with a primary program delivery consultant to provide professional services to the Authority for delivery of the high-speed rail program.

We're asking prime contractors, small businesses and other members of the industry to respond to questions about the

best way to package the procurement by August 12. We want to eliminate as many barriers as we can that companies might encounter if they bid and work on the contract.

On August 4, the Authority hosted an industry forum where prime contractors and small businesses learned more about the procurement and the importance of small business participation. Industry feedback we receive will help the Authority finalize this procurement before the anticipated release

of the RFQ in September.

- The anticipated timeline for this procurement is as follows:
- RFQ Release: September 2021
- Virtual Pre-Bid Conference: October 2021
- Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Due Date: January 2022

Karen Massie

High-Speed Rail Station Coming to Fresno

Fresno is getting ready for high-speed rail trains. The California High-Speed Rail Authority hosted a pre-bid conference for a [Request for Qualifications](#) for the historic train station in downtown Fresno.

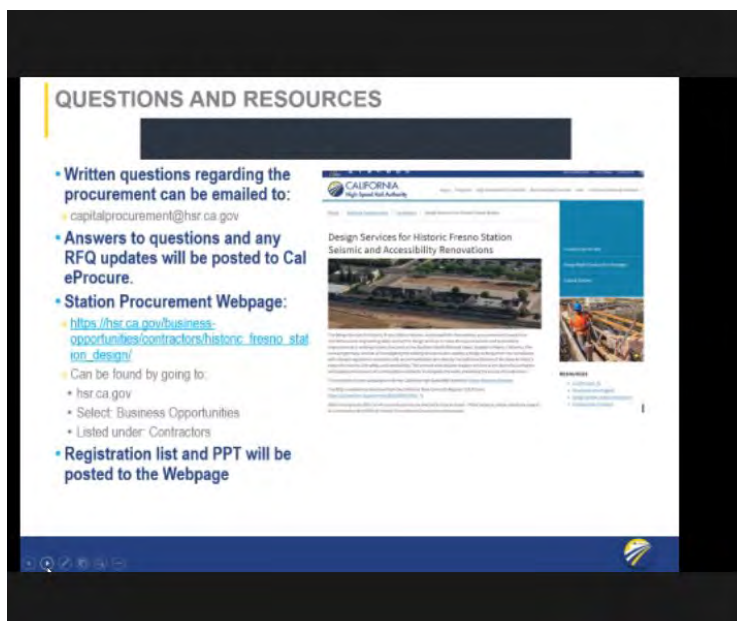
[The Southern Pacific Railroad Depot](#) at Tulare and H Streets dates back to 1889 and the beginnings of Fresno when the town

grew up around the structure. The depot, which closed in 1971, features Queen Ann style architecture and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

We're planning to incorporate the depot into the future high-speed rail station, but before that can happen it needs seismic and accessibility renovations. We need firms

interested in providing architectural and engineering design services to turn in a Statement of Qualifications on why they're qualified to make improvements to existing historic structures. Because of our 30% small business participation goal, small businesses will also be a part of the final contract for design services.

Karen Massie



Catrina Blair, Chief of the Process and Program Development Branch (top) and Alice Rodriguez, Deputy Director of External Affairs (bottom) spoke at a pre-bid conference for a Request for Qualifications for the historic Southern Pacific Railroad Depot in Fresno. It needs seismic and accessibility renovations before becoming part of a future high-speed rail station.

In Pursuit of Engineering Excellence

When asked what he finds most exciting about being part of high-speed rail, civil engineer Isaac Rosales is reminded of a quote by motivational speaker and author Eric Thomas. "Be phenomenal or be forgotten."

A construction field engineer by trade, Rosales works on the southern-most segment of **Construction Package 2-3** spanning Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties and serves as the eyes and ears for contractor Dragados-Flatiron Joint Venture.

"I wasn't the kid who always knew they wanted to be an engineer. I wanted a job where I could be outside experiencing the elements and, if possible, make a decent living doing it. At that time, I was not sure that job existed," explained Rosales. "When I graduated high school, my dad was the one who turned me on to civil engineering. He felt the demand for civil engineers was only growing. I eventually took his advice and investigated."

While at Fresno State, Rosales met with a counselor to discuss declaring as a civil engineering major, where he was told how difficult the major was and that the drop-out rate was high. Rosales declared his major the

same day, and it was that conversation that lit a fire inside him to prove the counselor wrong.

He became a student assistant at Caltrans in 2009, but due to a downward economy and a hiring freeze, Rosales decided to focus on refining other skills he thought were lacking, like communication. He became a financial advisor at New York Life focusing on sales. From there, he would work at engineering firms like Krazan & Associates and Kleinfelder before returning to state service at Caltrans and now high-speed rail.

His responsibilities include oversight of a 23-mile segment between Tulare and Kings counties, including structures like the Tule River Viaduct and Avenue 88 Grade Separation in Tulare County.

"The best part of working for high-speed rail for me is knowing that we're all a part of a much larger system, and I get to be part of its legacy," added Rosales. "This is a phenomenal project and will never be forgotten."

His advice for future engineers – be fluid. "As engineers, we have the training and education to get the job done. However, that education and training sometimes lead

"The best part of working for high-speed rail for me is knowing that we're all a part of a much larger system, and I get to be part of its legacy. This is a phenomenal project and will never be forgotten."

Isaac Rosales
Civil Engineer
Construction Package 2-3

us to become rigid in our thinking. Large infrastructure projects are ever-changing in real-time. Engineers must be like water, constantly adapting to the challenges that are in front of them. Be open minded to new solutions."

Augie Blancas

1. & 2. After a college counselor questioned his career plans, Isaac Rosales set out to prove the counselor wrong. Today, he's a civil engineer working on Construction Package 2-3 for the high-speed rail project and encouraging other young people to get an engineering degree.

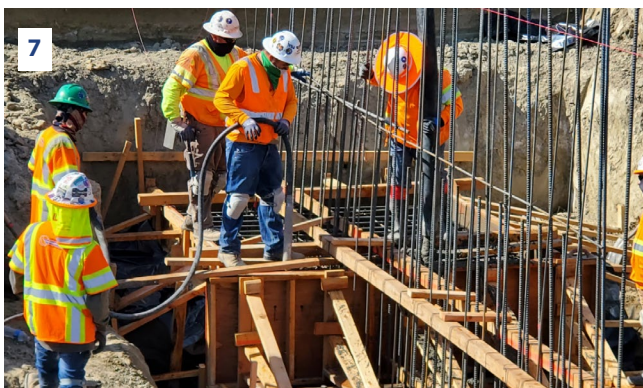
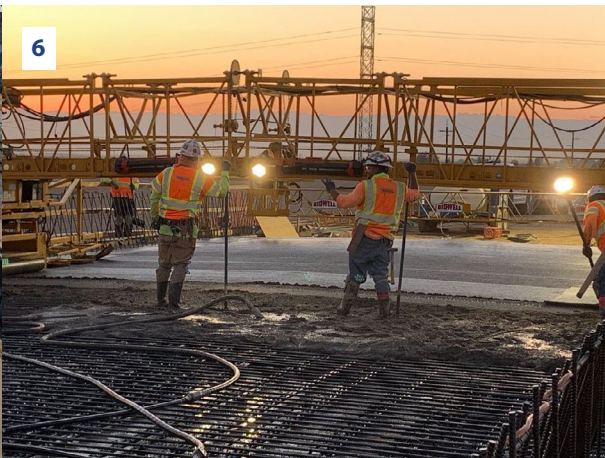
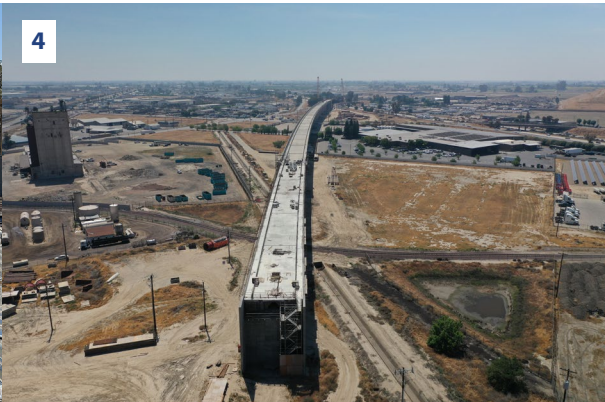
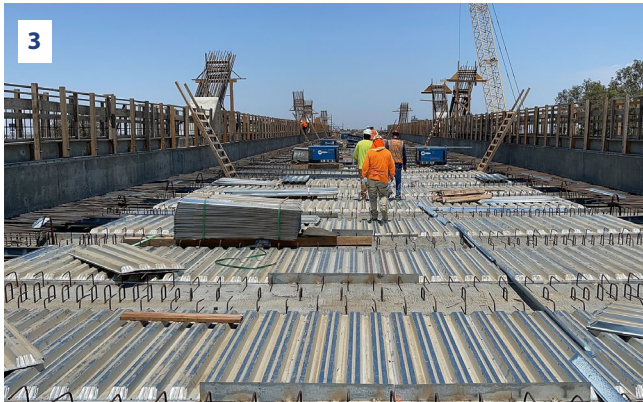
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High-Speed Rail Happenings



1. After installing the mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) panels on McCombs Road north of Wasco, crews worked on falsework for the posts, stringers and beams for the structure.

2. At Davis Avenue in Fresno County, crews worked on the mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) coping, the portion of the retaining wall that hides the top edge of the facing panels.

3. & 4. Workers install metal decking on top of the Cedar Viaduct in south Fresno. When completed, the 3,700-foot structure will carry high-speed trains over State Route 99, North Avenue, Cedar Avenue and Golden State Boulevard.

5. The Fresno Trench is approximately one mile long and will carry high-speed trains under State Route 180, a rail spur and an irrigation canal.

6. Crews needed extra lights to start pouring concrete before dawn on the Jackson Avenue overcrossing in Kings County. It will take traffic over future high-speed rail lines when completed.

7. The Authority tabulates the number of construction workers on the high-speed rail project each week. The highest number dispatched to job sites in one week has reached more than 1,200. Most of the workers hail from the Central Valley.

8. The Authority has launched a billboard campaign celebrating jobs created by construction of the high-speed rail project. This image is located off State Route 99 near Wasco.

Drone Team Documents High-Speed Rail History

Count Multimedia Manager Justin Chechourka and Digital Content and Production Manager Scott Waters among those who want to hop aboard the nation's first high-speed train. They're already traveling along the high-speed rail alignment producing videos of viaducts taking shape, tunnel locations and [proposed station sites](#). Earlier this year, they [recorded Governor Gavin Newsom excitedly walking](#) along the top of the award-winning San Joaquin River Viaduct during his first visit to the construction area.

Both Waters and Chechourka spent years in television news before making the jump to the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

"Being a TV producer let me be creative and serve the public by providing critical information, particularly during major events. I loved the writing and creativity," Chechourka recalled about producing news at Sacramento's KCRA for nearly 10 years. "Now I tell stories about the importance and

impact of high-speed rail. At the same time, I get to do some graphic design, photography, videography and web design."

He also took his passion for sports, beer, movies and TV shows to the pop culture website [monkeysfightingrobots.co](#) and he published his first book, *Sacramento Beer: A Craft History*.

Waters has fond memories of working in television as well. After a stint as a technical director at a Midwest station, he was soon peering through a camera eyepiece as a videographer and covering everything from Mississippi flooding to the Superbowl. He moved west to Sacramento where he worked for ABC, CBS and Fox affiliates.

"People think TV news is glamorous," Waters laughed. "They don't know how far I walked, how many fences I jumped, filthy places and bad weather I endured to get great shots that were not only seen locally but broadcast globally by TV networks."

Many people don't know Waters takes lots

of shots of slithering snakes. He owns several and helps others who want to identify or need tips on caring for reptiles.

The TV veterans are giddy about getting their hands on a new device they added to their arsenal at the Authority. They have a UAV, unmanned aerial vehicle, better known as a drone. Earlier this year, Chechourka became a certified drone pilot through the Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Transportation.

"When this project broke ground six years ago, it was easy to capture the scope and size of high-speed rail structures," Chechourka explained. "But as construction progressed, structures like the [San Joaquin River Viaduct](#) and [Cedar Viaduct](#) continued to get bigger and bigger and became difficult to capture."

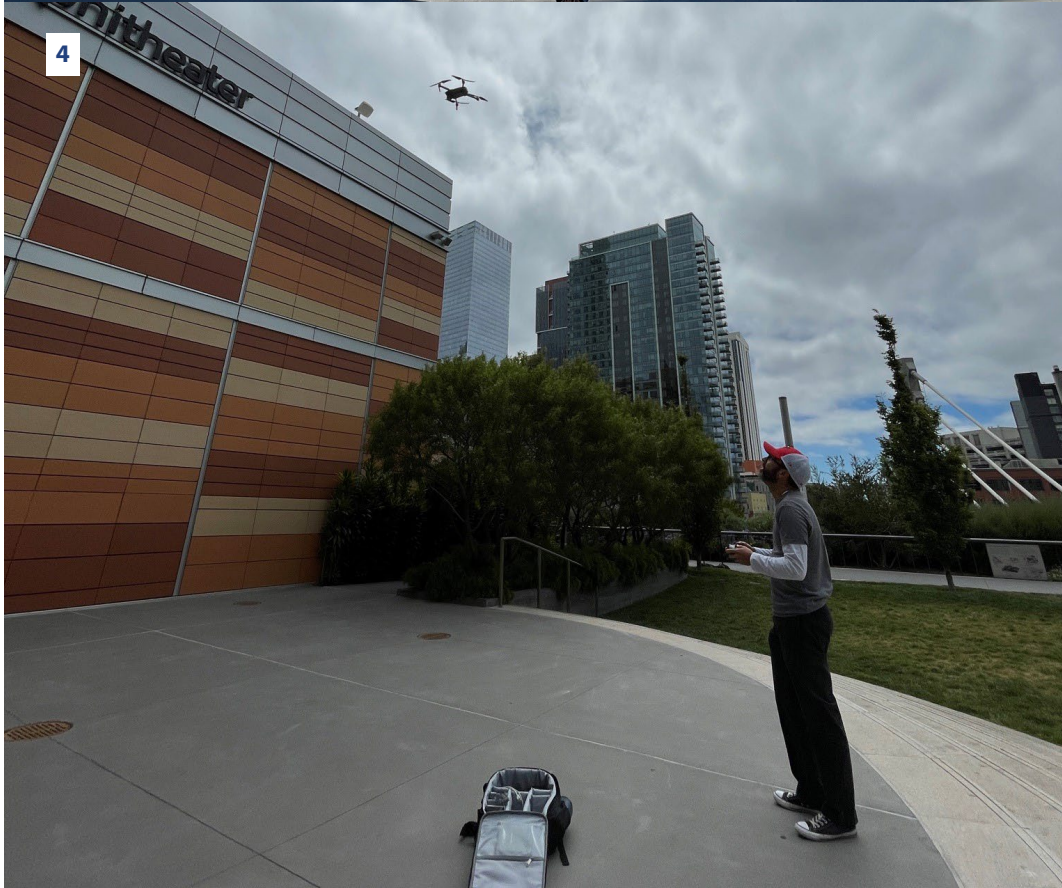
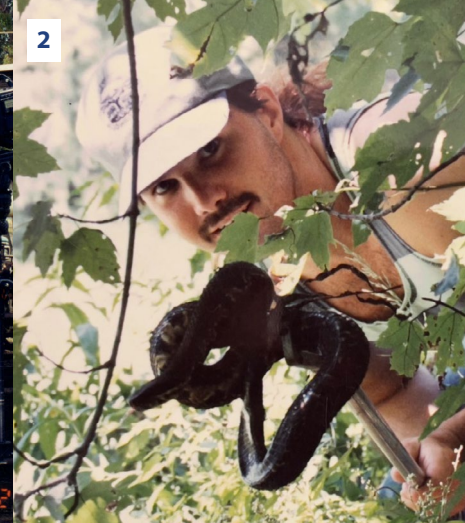
Planes were used to get photos and video, but quite often they were flying so high the structures appeared small.



Multimedia Manager Justin Chechourka sat in downtown San Francisco and used a drone to capture video of the Salesforce Transit Center, a stop for future high-speed rail trains. He said the drone allows him to show the true scope of the project along with details and quality of the work.

“The drone allows us to get above the project and show the true scope without being so far away. You can see the details and quality of the work.”

Justin Chechourka
Multimedia Manager
California High-Speed Rail Authority



“The drone allows us to get above the project and show the true scope without being so far away. You can see the details and quality of the work,” he noted.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the drone allowed Waters and Chechourka to socially distance from construction crews and snag pictures without getting too close to people physically.

Waters, who helps with drone shoots, is working on obtaining his license, too. “There’s history in this,” he said. “It’s a huge honor to document this project for the people of California and the world. The amount of pride I have is immeasurable. I feel a duty to document it the best way we can.”

Rachel Kesting/Karen Massie

1. Digital Content and Production Manager Scott Waters was a news photographer for 25 years before coming to the Authority. He still shoots and edits and is working on obtaining his drone license to capture video and document the high-speed rail project.

2. Waters was conducting a study when he found a cottonmouth snake in the wild in Illinois. He’s owned several snakes over the years and helps others who need tips on identifying and caring for them.

3. Earlier this year, Scott Waters and Multimedia Manager Justin Chechourka captured video of Governor Gavin Newsom as he strode atop the San Joaquin River Viaduct just north of Fresno.

4. A huge building didn’t stop Justin Chechourka from seeing the Salesforce Transit Center in San Francisco. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the drone allowed him to stay safe and socially distance from people while getting shots of them up close and personal.



Sacramento Regional Transit Ready for More Riders

When the pandemic hit last year, it took a toll on ridership for transit agencies across the country. Passengers stayed home. Ridership numbers plummeted. The **Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT)** took a punch, but it wasn't as bad as it was for others according to Director of Marketing Jessica Gonzalez. "We experienced ridership drops of approximately 60% pre-COVID-19 ridership levels, faring much better than some peer transit agencies in California, who experienced ridership drops between 85 to 95%," she explained.

During the lockdown, essential workers kept catching SacRT trains and buses to get to work at jobs at grocery stores, medical, energy, transit, and food and agriculture facilities. They made more than 10 million trips and the number of calls for SmaRT Ride microtransit and SacRT GO paratransit services skyrocketed. Combined, ridership has risen 58% over last year for these on-demand services.

Rider surveys gave SacRT high marks for safety protocols that include disinfecting buses, light rail trains and facilities, cleaning all touch points, enforcing social distancing and rear door boarding, and requiring riders and employees to wear masks.

Ridership is creeping up. April was up approximately 30% over April 2020 and student ridership has doubled over the last two months. Commuters told SacRT they'll take more trips once more people

are vaccinated and the number of COVID-19 cases drop.

Passengers will be happy to note SacRT has added additional services in July, including annexing the City of Elk Grove's transit services into the district and adding a new SmaRT Ride zone in Elk Grove.

Emergency relief from the federal government has helped SacRT weather pandemic financial losses. "We expect to receive over \$220 million to support our essential service," Gonzalez said. The funding has also allowed SacRT to avoid implementing employee layoffs, furloughs and salary cuts, while maintaining service levels close to 100%."

The agency was also awarded more than \$33 million in funding from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). The funding will pay for \$22 million to accelerate the Light Rail Modernization Project, \$5 million to support Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) tank and bus replacements, \$4.5

"It has been truly amazing how much SacRT has been able to accomplish despite the pandemic challenges."

Jessica Gonzalez
Director of Marketing
Sacramento Regional Transit District



1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, passengers used more on-demand services. Ridership on Sacramento Regional Transit's SmaRT Ride, microtransit and SacRT GO paratransit dramatically increased by 58%.



2. In 2019, the Transportation Security Administration honored SacRT with a Gold Standard Security Award for security and emergency preparedness which includes security training, drills, background checks and public outreach.

million to further the Sacramento Valley Station Loop Stations Project and \$1.6 million to complete the funding needed to reimagine the Watt/I-80 Station.

The projects will mean a big boost for small businesses. The agency has a Small and Local Business Preference Program with a participation goal of 25% for certified small businesses. SacRT also has a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program with 4.57% participation goal for DBEs.

One of SacRT's largest upcoming projects is the Light Rail Modernization Project which includes buying 76 low-floor light rail trains and converting light rail stations to accommodate the train's new low-floor design and adding a passing track at two locations, which will increase the frequency of trains at Folsom stations.

One of the biggest challenges for small businesses is learning to navigate the government contracting process and meeting requirements. "Small businesses need to be able to obtain performance and payment bonds," explained Gonzalez. "They're encouraged to take advantage of the free resources that can assist them with bonding and to provide guidance for navigating government contracting." That list of resources is located on [SacRT's procurement webpage](#).

The agency posts its contracts on the [PlanetBids system](#). Small businesses can register as a vendor to advertise themselves and get the system to send them notices about contracts they're interested in. Gonzalez added, "Government contracting can be confusing to first time bidders. Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't get discouraged if you don't win a contract right away. Be persistent and keep trying!"

Meanwhile, as the economy reopens and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, SacRT keeps looking forward toward better days ahead. "It has been truly amazing how much SacRT has been able to accomplish despite the pandemic challenges," Gonzalez pointed out. "We're ready to welcome riders with safe, clean, and expanded services and committed to providing equitable, accessible and sustainable transportation that supports the region's economy while meeting environmental goals."

Karen Massie



1. & 2. SacRT is encouraging small businesses to participate in its upcoming Light Rail Modernization Project. It includes buying low-floor light rail trains and converting stations to accommodate the new train design and adding a passing track at two locations.

3. To keep passengers safe, SacRT passengers are currently required to wear masks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SacRT implemented an aggressive deep cleaning program for nearly 100 light rail trains and more than 300 buses. The vehicles were fogged with chlorine dioxide to kill germs and every night they were cleaned and sanitized by hand.

*Some photos taken prior to COVID-19 social distancing requirements



LATEST VIDEOS: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/CAHIGHSPEDRAIL



July Construction Update

Crews completed the first concrete pour on the box girder section at the north side of the Wasco Viaduct in Kern County. At the center of the viaduct, crews are bringing the box section and pergola sections together. On the west side, they're erecting falsework that will connect both sides together.



Interested in doing business with High-Speed Rail?

Visit www.ConnectHSR.com



SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

AS OF MAY 31, 2021

626 Certified Small Businesses working on the high-speed rail program statewide

201 Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises
70 Certified Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA:

218 Certified Small Businesses

CENTRAL VALLEY:

191 Certified Small Businesses

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:

199 Certified Small Businesses

OUTSIDE OF CALIFORNIA:

18 Certified Small Businesses