

# Los Angeles Section

*Monthly: Est. 1913*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michael Thornton, P.E.  
Los Angeles Section President



### Are We Approaching a Transportation Cliff?

When I selected transportation as a topic to write about this month, I was thinking it was going to be good news after Congress approved MAP-21. After some research, I learned it isn't all good news. First a needs assessment followed by funding, the federal transportation reauthorization, and finally where we go from here.

#### Needs Assessment

In 2012, ASCE Region 9 California Report Card graded our State's transportation infrastructure with a C-, up from a D+ in 2006. The report card indicates that "There is a need for \$10 billion per year more to be spent for ongoing maintenance or existing facilities and an investment of \$36.5 billion in order to raise Transportation to a B grade." The primary reason for the grade increase was the voters of California stepped forward and approved Proposition 1B in 2006 that secured nearly \$20 billion for transportation improvements.

The bond funding was used to improve systems throughout the Los Angeles Section. In the Inland Empire, my neighborhood, many projects were either completed or are ongoing including the long overdue 91-60-215 Interchange; my guess is 30 years behind when it should have been completed. While traveling around the Los Angeles Section, I encounter freeway construction projects just about everywhere. Funding was also used for a number of other projects including rail improvement projects.

To put Proposition 1B in perspective, again it totaled about \$20 billion and was implemented over the last 5 years or \$4 billion annually. It is certainly "a far cry" from the needed \$10 billion. Further, according to Aaron Hake of Riverside County Transportation Commission, all Proposition 1B funds will be completely obligated by the end of this year and transportation officials are discussing what comes next. In other words, State bond funding for future projects is not in place.

ASCE has done a tremendous job explaining the consequences of not acting to maintain our precious infrastructure in its "Failure to Act" report. Nationally, ASCE's economic report on surface transportation found that our deteriorating infrastructure will cost the American economy more than 876,000 jobs and suppress the growth of our GDP by \$897 billion by the year 2020. Further, we are facing a funding gap of about \$94 billion a year with our current spending levels. ASCE indicates that of the top 20 economic countries in the world, the US – once the world's leader - is near the bottom as it relates to conditions of our roads and railroads, 19th and 18th respectively. According to the report, the Far West, which includes California, has the greatest amount of pavement and road capacity deficiencies in the nation. Overall, the nation is carrying a backlog \$3.3 trillion of deferred surface transportation needs, wow!

*continued on page 3*

VOL. XLXII NO. 11

## In This Issue *page*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE .....	1
REGION 9 GOV'T. RELATIONS .....	2
RECOGNIZING A CIVIL ENGINEER.....	4
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION DONORS.....	5-6
REGION 9 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE.....	7
PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY.....	8-9



# Region 9 Government Relations Committee

*By Shahnawaz Ahmad, Chair*



Many of you may read the monthly report on State Legislation in a Section Newsletter or maybe you have participated in the annual Legislative Day in Sacramento, but did you ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes to make those things happen?

Region 9 has two active policy committees who meet regularly to review legislation related to water and the environment, and transportation. But the interests of civil engineers in California cover much more ground than these three subject areas. Region 9's Government Relations Committee (GRC) takes responsibility for all of the legislation and regulations that fall outside of these three subject areas.

With representatives from each section, the GRC meets monthly via conference call to review legislative changes, make recommendations to the Region 9 Board of Governors, share section information related to government relations, and plan Region 9's annual trip to Sacramento.

The California Legislature introduced 2,127 bills in 2012 and 2,719 bills in 2011 – almost 5,000 bills in the two-year session that just ended. Of those 5,000 bills, Region 9 eventually looked at about 85 that could have an impact on the practice of civil engineering and actively engaged on about 20 of the most important. Our level of engagement varied with the importance of the legislation and ranged from simply writing a letter of support or opposition, all the way to lobbying for the bill with our grass-roots network or our lobbyist, Richard Markuson, in Sacramento, and ending with a handful of bills that we encourage the Governor to sign – and in some cases, veto.

The GRC also works closely with the Society's Government Relations staff in Washington and utilizes their grass-roots advocacy system to contact Region 9 members about California legislation (If you get one of these alerts, please participate as it has been deemed a very important measure – and the voice of civil engineers is important and well-respected).

The GRC is also responsible for a liaison role with the State Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists (BPELSG). This role includes review of the Board agenda for regulation changes and making recommendations for appointments to the Board. We also try to have a Region 9 representative at every board meeting to share ASCE information and represent the unique perspective of civil engineers in both public and private practice.

Without a doubt, the GRC "capstone" event is the annual Legislative Day where more than 50 Region 9 members visit Sacramento to meet with staff and members of the State Legislature. In February

2012, Region 9 engaged in more than 90 visits to share information about ASCE and establish Region 9 as a resource for elected officials with questions about engineering and infrastructure. In fact, the 2012 California Infrastructure Report Card was timed to be released that day.



Our major endeavor in 2013 is the creation of a Joint Committee on Infrastructure in the California Legislature – an idea embraced by the Legislature's own Legislative Analyst as key to setting a unified state policy for infrastructure investments. We will also be holding our Legislative Day as a stand

alone event for the first time on May 15. Normally, the Legislative Day is held in conjunction with the Region 9 Infrastructure Symposium, but in 2013, the Symposium will be held in Los Angeles as part of the Los Angeles Section's 100th anniversary.

Make sure you vote on November 6. In addition to a hotly contested Presidential election, there are 11 State Propositions on the ballot. There is not enough space to discuss them here, but read your election pamphlet to get the details.

Region 9 has the good fortune of having a core of very dedicated volunteers to govern the region and advance ASCE policies in California but there is always room for more participation. If you have an interest in participating in any of these activities, please contact me.



**Funding**

Funding for transportation projects comes from a variable cornucopia of sources including gas taxes, toll roads, vehicle license fees, user fees, and local taxes with the primary source being gas taxes. According to the American Petroleum Institute, the Federal excise tax on gasoline is 18.4 cents per gallon (cpg), established during my youth in the 1980's. Federal funds are accumulated in what is known as the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and then returned to states to be spent on transportation improvements. California is what is referred to as a donor state meaning we get back less than we contribute. When I first started to drive, prices were around \$1 cpg. Today prices are 4 times that but the federal tax is still the same. Obviously, it doesn't buy what it used to.

Added to the federal revenue is California's State excise tax at 36.0 cpg together with other State taxes and fees total 13.3 cpg. But wait, we aren't quite finished yet, self help agencies have been established in the Inland Empire, and I am sure that it is similar to other locations, that voter approved legislation adding another 0.5 cpg to the gas tax. The total gas tax for Inland Empire residents is 68.2 cpg. Vehicle license fees are also a key funding source for infrastructure investment but those funds have often faced raids during perpetual challenging State budget times leaving little for transportation investment.

Toll use is becoming more prevalent and is an excellent tool. However, it historically is only used as part of the States highway system. I can't think of any toll roads in Riverside or San Bernardino Counties today although Riverside County Transportation Commission is working toward extending the 91 toll lanes into Riverside County.

For the mass transit system, it is well documented that they are typically taxpayer subsidized, meaning the user fees only pay part of the operations costs.

**Federal Transportation Reauthorization**

"Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)" was signed into law by President Obama in June of this year. It was a big victory for ASCE and our membership, or was it? The law maintains current annual funding levels with an inflation adjustment for the next two years. MAP-21 will invest \$105-billion in our nation's transportation systems. Based on press releases from California Senator Boxer, Chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, it was the most significant jobs bill that was passed by Congress this year and it is "landmark" legislation for future transportation bills. It consolidates programs from about 90 to 30 to increase project delivery efficiency. Further, it streamlines environmental processing by delegating authority to the states and eliminates the dreaded "earmarks".

One program recognized as being very successful is the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program. It provides direct loans, loan guarantees, and other forms of federal credit assistance for critical surface transportation projects. Under MAP-21, the TIFIA program will receive \$750 million in FY 2013, up from the current level of \$122 million. In FY 2014, TIFIA will receive \$1 billion.

**Get your TIFIA projects ready!**

Historically, federal transportation bills have been 6 years bills. The two year bill is the result of limited funding. The HTF will be broke in two years according to ASCE Washington DC staff. Revenues simply haven't kept pace with expenditures. Remember, ASCE Region 9's report card shows we need greater expenditures; yet with today's funding levels, may be in jeopardy making matters worse.

**Funding Going Forward**

To summarize what I stated above, the needs are as great as ever, the funding sources we have are insufficient and they are under attack. So, how should we move forward? According to Mr. Hake, the funding solution is everything, higher gas taxes, securing vehicle license fees for transportation only, toll roads, user fees, and perhaps the vehicle miles traveled tax could assist since electric, together with more energy efficient vehicles, will result in less gas tax revenues.

Others say HTF is past its usefulness. Why not eliminate it and send the funding back to the states? It would assist California, remember we are a donor state, and it would eliminate federal processing costs and regulatory requirements. Of course that won't solve our funding challenges alone, new revenues must be identified.

Voters in both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties have approved a local 0.5 cpg at nearly a 70% rate. Is it time for ASCE to support an increase to that funding source and if so, what should the amount be?

Clearly, there is a transportation funding cliff on the horizon with Proposition 1B funding gone at the end of this year and no replacement funding sources identified. Further, federal funding will elapse at the end of 2014 unless other funding sources can be identified. How could such a source be identified in the current federal political climate? That leaves local funding and the private sector as sources for funding.

I call upon ASCE to advocate for greater return of federal and state funding to local agencies and encourage increases in local funding for project implementation. Further, we must lead the efforts to find methods to infuse private sector funding in public transportation programs. It's a huge effort but, as I commented last, "If not now, when and if not you, who?" We, the LA Section of more than 8,000 members, can make a difference.

Next month I will discuss the long awaited State Water Bond.



[www.ascelasection.org](http://www.ascelasection.org)

# Recognizing a Civil Engineering Hero: Theodore Judah, M. ASCE

*By Chuck Spinks, Past Region 9 Director*



This year, 2012, is the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's signing of the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862. This Act provided the funding for the construction of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads between Sacramento and Omaha.

The Act probably would not have been approved if it was not for the extreme efforts of a Civil Engineer and Member of ASCE, Theodore Judah. Judah led the survey party that identified the ultimate alignment chosen for the Transcontinental Railroad over the Sierras following the Dutch Flat Divide between the Yuba and American Rivers. His aggressive efforts to sell the Pacific Railroad and this alignment to potential investors in California and to Congress in Washington resulted in ridicule from the media of the day. But he persevered and obtained the backing of four businessmen in Sacramento: Crocker, Hopkins, Huntington, and Stanford, the Central Pacific's "Big Four". The Central Pacific incorporated in 1861, and laid its first tracks in January 1863. On May 10, 1869, almost six years after Judah's untimely death, the "golden

spike" was driven in Promontory Utah, completing the Transcontinental Railroad.

In the 1930's a plan was initiated to construct a monument to Judah on a large granite boulders from the Sierra Nevada. The monument was dedicated at a local ASCE meeting on April 26, 1930, and the completed monument was unveiled in February, 1931 on the landscaped lawn fronting the Southern Pacific Depot. The monument shared the lawn with two retired locomotives, the C. P. Huntington, and the Cab Forward #4294. The plaque read:



THAT THE WEST MAY REMEMBER  
THEODORE DEHON JUDAH  
PIONEER, CIVIL ENGINEER AND TIRELESS ADVOCATE OF A  
GREAT TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD  
-AMERICA'S FIRST-

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED BY THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY, WHO IN 1930 WERE CARRYING ON THE WORK HE BEGAN IN 1860. HE CONVINCED FOUR SACRAMENTO MERCHANTS THAT HIS PLAN WAS PRACTICABLE AND ENLISTED THEIR HELP. GROUND WAS BROKEN FOR THE RAILROAD JANUARY 8, 1863, AT THE FOOT OF NEARBY K STREET.

JUDAH DIED NOVEMBER 2, 1863.

THE ROAD WAS BUILT PAST THE SITE OF THIS MONUMENT OVER THE LOFTY SIERRA, ALONG THE LINE OF JUDAH'S SURVEY, TO A JUNCTION WITH THE UNION PACIFIC AT PROMONTORY, UTAH, WHERE ON MAY 10, 1869, THE "LAST SPIKE" WAS DRIVEN.

Well, the statement on the plaque, "PAST THE SITE OF THIS MONUMENT", is no longer true. When I-5 and its new on-ramp were constructed in 1967, everything in the park was moved. The two locomotives now occupy prominent positions in the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) a few hundred feet from the Depot. But, the Judah Monument was relocated to an obscure location in a low area up against I-5 at the intersection of

2nd Street and L Street. The location is beyond the area frequented by visitors to Old Sacramento, and very few people even know it exists.

ASCE Region 9 would like to see the Judah Monument moved to more conspicuous and historically significant location. A potential location discussed with the CSRM is the proposed future plaza that will be constructed near the old Southern Pacific shops, just west of the old Boiler Shop. Some of the shop buildings will eventually become the State Railroad Technology Museum and be connected to the CSRM with a tunnel under the tracks. Our next step is to organize a fund-raising effort to pay for relocating the monument to its new site. This effort is just starting, so we are looking for volunteers from the Sections and Branches to participate on the Judah Monument Relocation Committee. Please contact me at Chuck Spinks, PE, CSRM Docent, [Chuck.spinks@kimley-horn.com](mailto:Chuck.spinks@kimley-horn.com) if you are interested.



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To donate, please visit [www.ascelasection.org](http://www.ascelasection.org)

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# Region 9 Legislative Update

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*By: Richard Markuson, R9 Advocate*

## **Recess Activities**

With the Legislature in recess until December, most of the political activity is focused on the November elections. Key to many interest groups are the tax increase measures (Prop 30, 38 & 39) and how the Legislature and Administration will grapple with the State budget should Prop 30 – upon which was built the 2012-2013 budget – fail and the approved trigger cuts be implemented – primarily on K-12 education. Some feel the Legislature would try to “undo” the cuts but the Governor has said he would be willing to “implement the will of the people” and resist any effort to mitigate the impact to schools.

## **Interim Hearings**

The Senate Transportation and Housing Committee will be holding two interim hearings in November. On Tuesday, November 27th the committee will hold a 10:00 a.m. informational hearing on Implementation Transportation Development Act in Ventura County at the County Supervisors Hearing Room, Hall of Administration, 800 South Victoria Avenue, Ventura. On Wednesday, November 28th they will hold a 10 a.m. informational hearing on the Caltrans Peer Review Process in the State Capitol.

## **Recent Reports**

The Air Resources Board released a study on indoor air quality in child care facilities, finds levels of most pollutants and pesticides below level of concern, though “a few chemicals exceeded health guideline levels, especially formaldehyde, but there are a variety of simple steps that can significantly lower exposure to them.”

The Legislative Analyst’s Office released “Funding and Options for Near-Term Actions in the Delta,” finds state expenditures related to efforts in the Delta are estimated to total \$405 million in 2012-13.

The Nature Conservancy in California released “Where Does California’s Water Come From?” finds snowpack from the Sierra Nevada provides 65 percent of drinking water for Californians.

Controller John Chiang has released the financial statement and summary analysis of the state’s cash flow for September, shows total revenues were “\$162.5 million below (2.2 percent) projections contained in the 2012-13 State budget.” Release [here](#).

Pesticide Action Network released report “A Generation in Jeopardy: How pesticides are undermining our children’s health and intelligence,” findings include evidence linking pesticide exposure to “certain childhood cancers is particularly strong.”

Legislative Analyst’s Office releases updated report on 2012-13 budget plan, reflecting actions Gov. Brown took on budget related bills through Sept. 30, bill signing deadline.

American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy released “2012 Energy Efficiency Scorecard,” finds California is the second most energy efficient state.

The California Taxpayers Association has released its 2012 Legislative Voting Record which grades legislators on “major tax and fiscal legislation,” says 29 out of the 120 members scored 100%.

The Congress of California Seniors has released its Legislative Report Card for the 2012 session, says 52 of the 120 legislators received a score of 100.

Treasurer Bill Lockyer released 2012 Debt Affordability Report, findings include FY 2011-12 debt service was \$6.9 billion (7.9% of general fund revenues), estimates FY 2012-13 debt service at \$8.6 billion (8.9% of general fund revenues.)

California Water Boards released Fiscal Year 2011-12 Performance Fact Sheet, findings include regional water boards oversaw more than 32,000 dischargers, inspected nearly 5000 facilities, adjudicated more than 200 penalty and compliance actions and adopted mitigation plans for more than 100 polluted waterways.

CA Public Utilities Commission released 2010-2011 Energy Efficiency Annual Progress Evaluation Report, finds “groundbreaking” energy efficiency programs “resulted in savings of 5,900 gigawatt-hours of electricity,” enough to power “more than 600,000 households for a year.”

CA State Auditor has released “Metropolitan Transportation Commission: The Use of Toll Revenues to Purchase a New Headquarters Building Is Likely Legal, but the Transaction Exposes Toll Payers to Undisclosed Financial Risk.”

CA State Auditor has released its “California Department of Transportation: Its Poor Management of State Route 710 Extension Project Properties Costs the State Millions of Dollars Annually, Yet State Law Limits the Potential Income From Selling the Properties.”



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Copy deadline for the January 2013 issue is December 1, 2012; copy deadline for the February 2013 issue is January 1, 2013.

## A Great Idea from the Life Members

The ASCE Life Members' Public Image Committee request that members take their (to be discarded) Civil Engineering magazines to their doctor's office or barber shop and merge them with the stack of magazines. We feel that this will be an effective way to make the general public more aware of what civil engineers do.

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