

# Interchange



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## Smooth Ride

Status Report: I-5 Repaving Sets Stage for HOV Lanes

Motorists are experiencing a smoother ride on the freshly repaved portions of Interstate 5 in the Santa Clarita Valley. Photo: M. Comeaux for Caltrans

### I-5 Pavement Rehabilitation

The Caltrans District 7 project is heading toward completion, anticipated for this October. At press time, required grinding of new roadway slab sections and punch list items remain.

This project covers a distance of 15.8 miles in northern Los Angeles County and near the city of Santa Clarita, from 0.5

miles south of the Interstate 5 / State Route 14 separation to 1.7 miles north of the I-5 Lake Hughes Road undercrossing.

This portion of I-5 has pavement that is more than 50 years old and is no longer adequate for the existing and future traffic loads. The project will extend the service life of the roadway and upgrade parts of the highway

**See INTERSTATE 5, page 4**

## NCTC: Good for North L.A. County Transportation Improvements in the Works

By Arthur Sohikian  
Executive Director, NCTC

These are exciting times for transportation investment and improvements for north Los Angeles County. Critical roadway transportation mobility improvements are taking shape on Interstate 5, State Route 14 and SR138. Enhancement of transit services provided by Metrolink, the Antelope Valley Transportation Authority and Santa Clarita Transit are in the works. And the Golden State Gateway Coalition has a staunch and influential ally in its efforts to advocate for transporta-

tion safety and improved mobility.

### NCTC Morphs Into JPA

The North Los Angeles County Transportation Coalition (NCTC) is a joint powers authority (JPA) comprising the County of Los Angeles (5th District), City of Palmdale, City of Lancaster and City of Santa Clarita. The NCTC was



Arthur Sohikian

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From the Executive Director

# Adding Capacity, Improving Safety

By Victor Lindenheim

Executive Director,  
Golden State Gateway Coalition

Californians spend hours every day sitting in traffic. And the roads they idle on are often rough and potholed, their exits, tunnels, guardrails, and bridges in terrible disrepair. According to transportation expert Robert Poole, this congestion and deterioration are outcomes of the way America provides its highways. He claims that our 20th-century model overly politicizes highway investment decisions, short-changing maintenance and sometimes making investments in projects whose costs exceed their benefits.

Yes, it happens, although our state and county agencies try to do the best they can with the resources they have and the rules they operate under. But, is there a better way?

In *Rethinking America's Highways*, Poole examines how our current model of state-owned highways came about and why it is failing to satisfy its customers. He argues for a new model that treats highways themselves as public utilities — like electricity, telephones and water supply.

If highways were provided commercially, Poole argues, people would pay for highways based on how much they used, and the companies would issue revenue bonds to invest in facilities people were willing to pay for. Arguing for highway investments to be motivated by economic rather than political factors, this book makes a case for a new approach to highways.

In rebuttal, one might ask if we, as consumers of electricity, communications services and water, are satisfied with the services we are receiving at the prices we are paying.

The answer may depend on where you live and who your service providers are.

Robert W. Poole is director of transportation policy at Reason Foun-



Victor Lindenheim

ation, a public policy think tank, and is the author or editor of five previous books on public policy.

Mr. Poole's organization, Reason Foundation, does an Annual Highway Report, comparing efficiency, effectiveness and conditions of highway systems on a state-by-state basis. Their 24th annual report is not kind to California, ranking our state 43rd overall in highway performance and cost-effectiveness, 47th in urban interstate pavement condition, 48th in urbanized area congestion and 49th in urban arterial condition.

Of particular concern is California's placement at 47th for its rural fatality rate (see page 3 for Interchange story on SR 138). There's better, if not great news for California in the rankings: 18th for overall fatality rate, 19th in structurally deficient bridges and 21st in the urban fatality rate.

Now, in fairness to our state, the data that the rankings are based on are from 2016 and 2017 — before massive infusions of Measure M and SB1 capital for transportation projects. And, with due deference to Mr. Poole's extensive knowledge and experience, a radical overhaul of our admittedly politically infused system is neither practical nor possible for the foreseeable future in California. Why not? ***Because the current system seems to be working.***

Funding is available and good things are happening right now. The agencies we have worked with through the years have helped to make projects happen, including Caltrans, Metro, L.A. County Department of Public Works and the U.S. Department of Transportation. In evidence, I submit the progress being made in North Los Angeles County,

A radical overhaul of our admittedly politically infused system is neither practical nor possible for the foreseeable future in California. Why not? Because the current system seems to be working.

in particular the projects of interest to the Gateway Coalition: Interstate 5, State Route 14, State Route 138 and The Old Road in Santa Clarita.

While differing in scope and location, these projects all have at least two objectives in common: adding roadway capacity and enhancing safety. Could it have happened sooner and at a lower cost? Maybe, maybe not. ***But it is happening now.***

Added roadway capacity's obvious benefit is that roads can accommodate more vehicles at a better level of service, i.e. higher speeds. From a safety standpoint, auxiliary lanes and roadway widening offer motorists more room for critical maneuvers such as merging, passing and safely exiting. Enforcement lane additions and expansions give law officers more room to work and better access for emergency vehicles and first responders.

So, to Mr. Poole, I would say your theories for improving the way additional capacity and safety enhancements on our highways are worth exploring, but for now, we in North Los Angeles County are appreciative of the improvements under way.



# SR 138 Improvements Needed Now

State Route 138, an important east-west thoroughfare linking Interstate 5 with the Antelope Valley, has for too long been plagued with fatal and near-fatal vehicular collisions.

In a recent example, at 8:32 p.m. Aug. 31, a head-on crash occurred on Highway 138 near the Old Ridge Route. Both east and west-bound lanes were blocked and both drivers had to be extricated from crushed vehicles.

CHP is investigating the collision between a blue passenger car and white pickup truck that was found on its side in the aftermath of the accident. Speed may have been a factor; it is not known at press time if alcohol was a factor. This section of the highway has a sweeping curve and poor visibility.

And, sadly, this follows another fatal collision the previous Sunday. On Aug. 25, a pedestrian was struck and killed on SR 138 near Quail Lake Road, just east of Interstate 5.

High accident rates on SR 138 are due to both driver behavior and roadway deficiencies. The road contains blind curves and limited safe passing zones, unsafe cross-street entry points and unpaved shoulders. Speeding and unsafe passing are common, exacerbating the accident rate and public safety concerns.

So what is being done? In response to concerns over driver behavior, and at the



**An ongoing pattern of serious traffic collisions on State Route 138, including a recent fatality, has highlighted the need for improvements to the east-west highway linking Interstate 5 to the Antelope Valley.**

*Photos courtesy of Jeff Zimmerman*

urging of the North County Transportation Coalition, the California Highway Patrol conducted an intensive enforcement action, with ongoing followup. The CHP issued more than 100 citations for speeding, unsafe passing and other infractions in a single day.

Caltrans is looking at adding signage and interim measures regarding passing and no passing zones. The agency has also agreed to construct a roundabout at 60th Street West and to install a traffic signal at 90th Street West.

For the longer term, Metro has completed environmental studies for the Northwest



138 Corridor Improvement Project. This is a major project that would widen the 36-mile east-west thoroughfare between Interstate 5 and SR

14 in the Antelope Valley from two lanes to four and six lanes at various points. Funding for the design phase is now being sought.

High accident rates on SR 138 are due to both driver behavior and roadway deficiencies. The road contains blind curves and limited safe passing zones, unsafe cross-street entry points and unpaved shoulders.



**The repaved stretch of Interstate 5 includes the lanes extending from the Newhall Pass toward Calgrove Boulevard.** *Photo: M. Comeaux for Caltrans*

## Interstate 5

Continued from page 1

that are failing, worn out or functionally obsolete.

Once completed, the new surface will provide a smoother, safer drive for motorists and will reduce time required for future maintenance, which will minimize future lane closures and delays for drivers.

### I-5 Capacity Enhancement Project Design

Sometimes referred to as the “Interstate 5 Carpool Lanes/Chokepoint Relief” Project, it has been environmentally cleared, and final design was completed in June of this year. We are told that a bid package will be readied by the end of 2019 and a construction start is estimated for summer 2020.

Construction cost estimates are now as high as \$679 million. Funding for

the roadway improvements is in place from combined federal, state and county sources. Metro has agreed to manage construction of the project, estimated to take four years to complete.

On the northbound side of I-5, two enhancements are being developed. First, existing I-5 HOV lanes, which run from the San Fernando Valley to the south, will be extended north from their current termination at SR-14 to just south of Parker Road, providing continuous HOV carpool lanes on I-5 through the Santa Clarita Valley. Second, auxiliary lanes will be completed between Calgrove Boulevard and Pico-Lyons, and between Valencia Boulevard and Magic Mountain Parkway. Two enhancements are also being developed for the southbound I-5. These include: an additional truck lane added from Pico Canyon Road-Lyons Avenue to SR-14, HOV

lanes will be extended south from Parker Road to SR-14, auxiliary lanes added from SR-126 to Rye Canyon, Rye Canyon to Magic Mountain Parkway, and Valencia Boulevard to McBean Parkway. Sound walls will be strategically located for the benefit of residents living near the freeway.

The new lanes will add capacity to the I-5 freeway

through Santa Clarita, which is now the third largest city in Los Angeles County and is expected to increase in population by more than 25,000 people by 2035 as per the City of Santa Clarita’s “One Valley One Vision” plan. The new lanes are expected to provide a much faster and smoother driving experience in the area for locals, commuters and other motorists.



**The newly repaved lanes heading south from Valencia Boulevard.** *Photo: M. Comeaux for Caltrans*



# SR 14 Study: Improve Safety, Ease Congestion

**A**t the urging of the North County Transportation Coalition, on a motion by Supervisor Kathryn Barger, the Metro board authorized and funded a study (currently in draft final form) to assess system performance of State Route 14. Starting in January, Caltrans executed the study, intending to identify the main bottlenecks impairing traffic flow on a 33-mile stretch of the freeway — from Interstate 5 to Pearblossom Highway/Angeles Crest Highway.

Roadway safety was the other motivating factor for the study: “A safety analysis was run in parallel with the operational analysis and concluded that the majority of bottlenecks, regardless of direction, resided in locations where the...

...accident rates were greater than the statewide average. The majority of the freeway study limits consists of a fluctuating roadway geometry of three to two lanes. These lane reductions contribute to an increase in merge conflicts resulting in sideswipe and rear-end crashes; diversion points increase decision making, which also results in incidents.”

Six locations were identified (three northbound and three southbound) where lane additions to mixed-flow lane drop locations and supplemental bridge work could improve traffic flow, reducing congestion on an important, consistently congested rush-hour commuter route.

Total cost estimates for the three northbound SR 14 improvement projects range

from \$78 million to \$105 million; total cost estimates for the three southbound improvements range from \$126 million to \$172 million. The proposed corrective measures are all within Santa Clarita city limits and Los Angeles County.

The Caltrans report summary concludes: “Through strategic partnership, the expectation is that NCTC, Caltrans and Metro work collectively to implement the identified projects to address critical north county transportation issues and promote a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California’s economy and livability.”

The Gateway Coalition will continue to monitor and support this effort. Stay tuned.

## NCTC

Continued from page 1

first informally assembled in 1995 by then-County Supervisor Mike Antonovich as an advisory body — coordinating information and providing a forum for discussion on regional transportation issues of mutual interest and concern.

By May 2018, with the leadership of County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, it achieved legal status as a JPA. NCTC exists today to develop policies and strategies that lead to the implementation of projects and programs to address critical transportation issues, promote economic development and maximize transportation funding opportunities for member jurisdictions. Its members collaborate on transportation issues, mobility programs, safety initiatives and project feasibility studies.

Recent legislative developments such as Measure M and Senate Bill 1 gave the NCTC reason to formalize into a joint powers authority to advocate for the return of taxpayer transportation dollars to the North County Subregion. As a legal entity, NCTC can pursue available transportation dollars from federal, state and county programs.

The NCTC JPA is governed by a board of directors representing the four member jurisdictions, meeting quarterly in a public forum. At the meetings, public input is invited, transportation-related agency reports are made, and priorities and plans are established to improve mobility and safety for north L.A. County travelers and commuters.

### Returning Your Tax Dollars for Transportation

You pay for transportation improvements in various taxes; federal and state gas taxes, sales taxes and vehicle registration fees. NCTC plans collaboratively for transportation improvement projects for the north L.A. County region and works with federal, state, local elected officials and transportation agencies like L.A. Metro, Caltrans and Metrolink

## NCTC JPA Board of Directors

- **County of Los Angeles:** 5th District Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Director of L.A. County Public Works Mark Pestrella, Golden State Gateway Coalition Executive Director Victor Lindenheim. Alternate: 5th District Supervisor Barger Transportation Deputy Dave Perry.
- **Palmdale:** Mayor Steve Hofbauer, Councilmember Richard Loa, Councilmember Austin Bishop. Alternate: Councilmember Juan Carrillo.
- **Lancaster:** Vice Mayor Marv Crist (chair), Councilmember Ken Mann, Lancaster City Manager Jason Caudle.
- **Santa Clarita:** Mayor Marsha McLean (vice chair), Councilmember Bob Kellar, Santa Clarita Public Works Director Robert Newman. Alternate: Santa Clarita City Engineer Mike Hennawy.

### Ex-Officio Members (non-voting):

- **Antelope Valley Transit Authority:** Executive Director Macy Neshati.
- **Santa Clarita Transit:** Transit Manager Adrian Aguilar.

**Executive Director:** Arthur V. Sohikian, AVS Consulting Inc.

to advocate for the investment of your tax dollars in mobility improvements in our region. The board’s quarterly meetings are open to the public — your participation and input are welcomed.

Please visit the NCTC website to learn more and to get involved at [www.northcountytransportationcoalition.org](http://www.northcountytransportationcoalition.org) or contact me, Arthur Sohikian, executive director, at [sohikian@northcountytransportationcoalition.org](mailto:sohikian@northcountytransportationcoalition.org).

# California Ranks 43rd in the Nation for Highway Performance, Cost-Effectiveness

*State's best rankings are overall fatality rate, structurally deficient bridges and urban fatality rate*

California's highway system ranks 43rd in the nation in overall cost-effectiveness and condition, according to the Annual Highway Report by Reason Foundation for 2019. This is a one-spot decrease from the previous report, where California ranked 42nd overall.

In safety and performance categories, California ranks 18th in overall fatality rate, 19th in structurally deficient bridges, 48th in traffic congestion, 47th in urban Interstate pavement condition and 45th in rural Interstate pavement condition.

On spending, California ranks 40th in total spending per mile and 30th in capital and bridge costs per mile.

"To improve in the rankings, California needs to improve its pavement conditions, reduce its urban area congestion, lower its maintenance and administrative disbursements per mile, and reduce its rural fatality rate. California is in the bottom 10 of all states in seven of the 13 total metrics. Compared to neighboring states, the report finds California's overall high-

### How California Ranks

*1 to 10 Very Good; 11 to 20 Good; 21 to 30 Average; 31 to 40 Bad; 41 to 50 Very Bad*

Category	Rank
Overall	43
Total Disbursements Per Mile	40
Capital & Bridge Disbursements Per Mile	30
Maintenance Disbursements Per Mile	44
Administrative Disbursements Per Mile	44
Rural Interstate Pavement Condition	45
Urban Interstate Pavement Condition	47
Rural Arterial Pavement Condition	35
Urban Arterial Pavement Condition	49
Urbanized Area Congestion	48
Structurally Deficient Bridges	19
Overall Fatality Rate	18
Rural Fatality Rate	47
Urban Fatality Rate	21

*Source: 2019 Annual Highway Report*

way performance is worse than Arizona (ranks 29th), Nevada (ranks 27th) and Oregon (ranks 12th)," said Baruch Feigenbaum, lead author of the Annual Highway Report and assistant director of transportation at Reason Foundation.

California's best rankings are in overall fatality rate (18th) and structurally deficient bridges (19th).

California's worst rankings are in urban arterial pavement condition (49th) and urban area congestion (48th).

California's state-controlled highway mileage makes it the 15th largest highway system in the country.

The Annual Highway Report is based on spending and performance data

submitted by state highway agencies to the federal government for 2016 as well as urban congestion data from INRIX and bridge condition data from the Better Roads inventory for 2017. For more details on the calculation of each of the 13 performance measures used in the report, as well as the overall performance measure, please refer to the appendix in the main report, which can be found at reason.org. The report's dataset includes Interstate, federal and state roads but not county or local roads.

All rankings are based on performance measures that are ratios rather than absolute values: the financial measures are disbursements per mile, the fatality rate is fatalities per 100 million vehicle-miles of travel, the urban congestion measure is the annual delay per auto commuter, and the others are percentages. For example, the state ranking 1st in structurally deficient bridges has the smallest percentage of structurally deficient bridges, not the smallest number of structurally deficient bridges.

"To improve in the rankings, California needs to improve its pavement conditions, reduce its urban area congestion, lower its maintenance and administrative disbursements per mile, and reduce its rural fatality rate. California is in the bottom 10 of all states in seven of the 13 total metrics."

— Baruch Feigenbaum, lead author, "Annual Highway Report"

# Kim Named Secretary of CalSTA

**D**avid S. Kim became the third secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) on July 1, 2019, following his appointment by Gov. Gavin Newsom in April 2019. In this role, David is responsible for oversight of 40,000 employees across eight departments, boards and commissions whose mission is to advance a safe, environmentally sustainable transportation system that maximizes mobility for all Californians.

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) is a cabinet-level agency focused solely on addressing the state's transportation issues. The mission of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) is to develop and coordinate the policies and programs of the state's transportation entities to achieve the state's mobility, safety and air quality objectives from its transportation system.

A longtime transportation leader with experience in the private sector as well as all three levels of government, David served as vice president of government affairs for Hyundai Motor Co. from 2017 to 2019. Prior to this assignment, David spent nearly eight years in senior-level roles at the U.S. Department of Transpor-



**David Kim**

tation. He served as deputy administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the No. 2 position in the agency. Additionally, he was FHWA's associate administrator for policy and governmental affairs and, before that, spent two years as deputy assistant secretary for governmental affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation.

At the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, David

led federal, state and local government affairs from 2004 to 2009 as deputy executive officer for federal advocacy and government relations. Additionally, he served in the administration of Gov. Gray Davis from 1999 to 2003, where he represented the State of California's interests before Congress and the executive branch on transportation, water, energy and environmental priorities. From 1998 to 1999, David worked in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative as deputy assistant U.S. trade representative for congressional affairs. He also spent three years as a Washington representative for the City of Los Angeles.

For a decade, David served on the staff of numerous elected officials in Los Angeles, Sacramento and Washington. He spent five years working in various capacities with Xavier Becerra, during his time in both the California State Assembly and Congress. David began his public service career as a field representative and administrative assistant to state Sen. David Roberti.

A native of Davis, California, David earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Occidental College and a master of public administration from the University of Southern California.

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## The Old Road Safety and Capacity Enhancements

**T**he process to improve mobility and safety on The Old Road in Santa Clarita is now under way. The Old Road runs north and south, parallel to Interstate 5. It is a critical arterial road, serving busy local residential and commercial areas in the Santa Clarita Valley. It is of particular importance to commuters, parents transporting students and first responders when Interstate 5 is closed due to weather or an accident.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is the lead agency on two

proposed improvement projects:

### **Henry Mayo Drive to Magic Mountain Parkway**

Widen The Old Road from four to six lanes between Henry Mayo Drive and Magic Mountain Parkway – a distance of about 2 miles. The project includes replacement of two bridges, one over the Santa Clara River and the other over an abandoned railroad track, and stream bank protection for the new bridge over the Santa Clara River. Also included are intersection enhancements, pedestrian and cyclist amenities along The

Old Road, and a multipurpose trail that connects to an existing regional river trail in the City of Santa Clarita.

The cost of the project is estimated at \$115 million. Current funding available is \$81.3 million, leaving a shortfall of \$33.7 million.

Technical and preliminary design studies are in process, followed by completion of required environmental assessments. LACDPW anticipates a 2024 construction start, with completion in 2026.

### **Lake Hughes Road to Hillcrest Parkway**

Reconstruct and widen

The Old Road from two lanes to four lanes between Lake Hughes Road and Hillcrest Parkway (2.27 miles). The proposed scope of the project includes installation of new signage, street lighting, traffic signals, and pedestrian and cyclist amenities along The Old Road. The proposed widening will require extensive hillside excavation, grading and drainage facilities.

Total project cost is estimated at \$25 million. Current funding for the project is \$5.6 million, leaving a shortfall of \$19.4 million.

# High Expectations, Solid Progress

By Tom DiPrima  
Chairman,  
Golden State Gateway Coalition

Every time I get behind the wheel of my vehicle, and take to the freeways, I am reminded about both the importance of what the Gateway Coalition is working to accomplish and the enormity of the task. I remain optimistic.

Our goal of improving safety and mobility on north Los Angeles County's main roads remains valid: Interstate 5, State Route 14, SR 138 and The Old Road. Evidence of progress can be seen and documented: I-5's pavement rehabilitation project is coming to a close, the capacity enhancement/carpool lanes design is



Tom DiPrima

done and the project is fully funded. The "bottleneck study" on SR 14 has been completed and decongestion improvement projects have been defined and recommended. On SR138, both Caltrans and CHP have been responsive to immediate local concerns for safety and Metro is focused on enhancements for the long term. The L.A. County Department of Public Works' plans to widen The Old Road are progressing, with more than 70% of the funding secured.

What does the Gateway Coalition do and why is the work important? The Coalition has been advocating for safety and mobility improvements on north Los Angeles County roads since its founding in 2002. Initially focusing on the Interstate 5 corridor, the Coalition has broadened its scope to include other main thoroughfares and continues to support allies working to improve other roads and even other modes of transportation.

Ultimately, we all want a trans-

portation system that works to move people and goods safely, effectively and efficiently. And so, we continue to seek support for key projects from the public, from our elected representatives and from the agencies on the front lines that are responsible for maintaining and improving our transportation systems.

The work is important because of the impact transportation has on our quality of life. Getting where you need to go in a safe and timely manner is important at least and critical at best. We need roads to receive and deliver the goods and services that are essential for us to function in our jobs, in our homes, our businesses and our communities. And, as we move to alternative fuels and vehicles, safe, well-maintained roads will still be essential.

So, when I look back to what we have accomplished, and look ahead to what is underway, I am encouraged to stay optimistic.

## ATIA: Senate EPW's Formula for Good Intentions

On July 30, the U.S. Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee unanimously passed S.2302, titled "America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA)." The bill includes authorization of \$287 billion from the Highway Trust Fund over five years in investments to maintain and repair America's roads and bridges.

The bill provides \$287 billion in spending from the Highway Trust Fund over five years, of which \$259 billion, or over 90%, is distributed to states by formula. The five-year funding level is more than a 27% increase above the FAST

Act (the current surface transportation authorization law) and will be the largest highway bill in history. The proposed legislation maintains each state's share of highway formula funding and expands the flexibility and eligible uses of formula funds provided by the Highway Trust Fund — supported by our individual federal gas tax contributions.

"Formula funding gives each state the flexibility to address their specific surface transportation needs," noted Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyoming, the committee's chairman, in remarks made during the mark-up of the bill. "By distributing the funding through this formu-

la, the legislation will help every state in the nation and keep projects moving ahead. It is good for rural areas. It's good for urban communities. It is good across the country," he added.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Delaware, the ranking member on the committee, added in his remarks that the bipartisan nature of the surface transportation bill "really should not come as a great surprise to anyone, because — in a greater sense — our nation's transportation infrastructure helps bring all Americans together. Both literally and figuratively, our roads, highways and bridges connect us to one another."

Jim Tymon, executive

director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, weighed in with his testimony before the committee: "When federal funds are predictable and stable, state DOTs are able to fully focus attention on delivering critical projects that improve safety, quality of life and economic opportunities for everyone."

**Current Status:** The committee (EPW) assigned to this bill sent it to the Senate as a whole for consideration on July 30, 2019. A vote for passage by the full Senate is unlikely this year. The bill could be considered as a basis for future action.