

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

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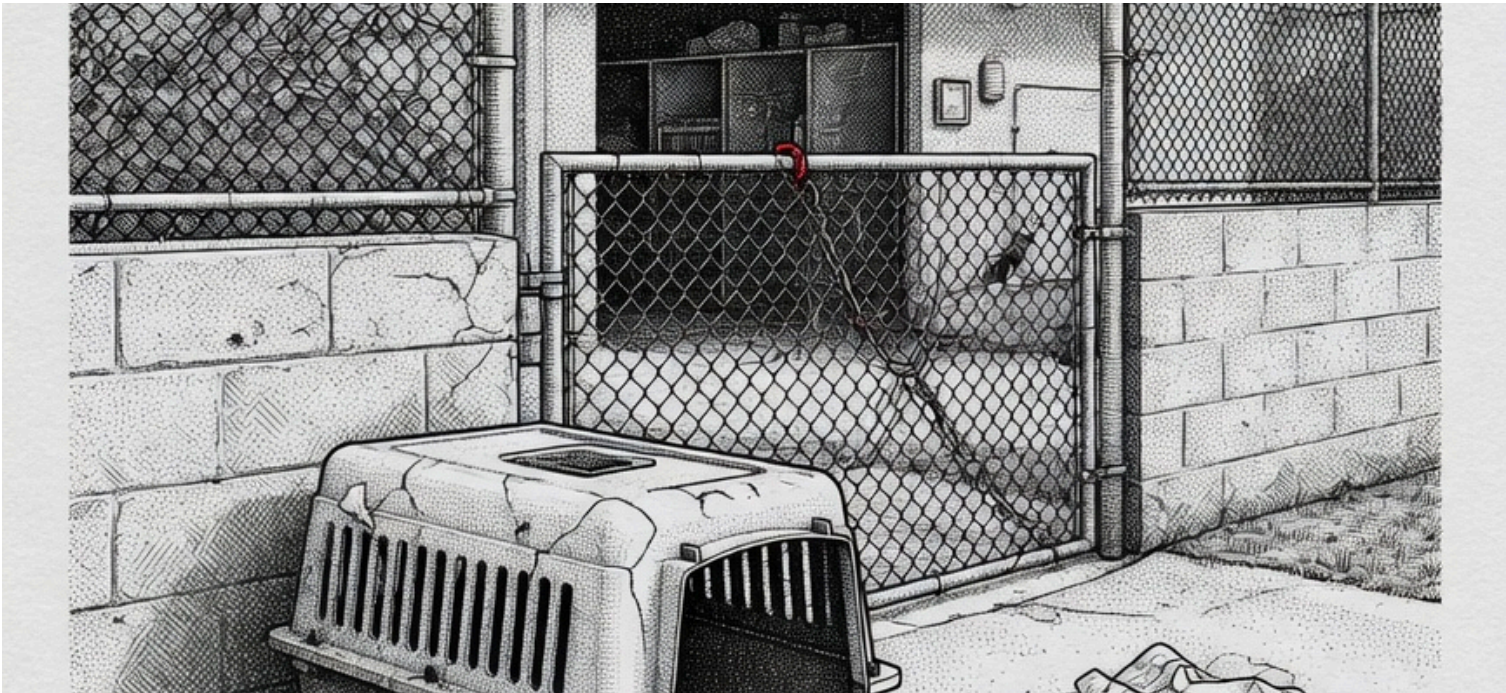
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COUNTY

Abused and Neglected Dog Rescued by Animal Services



Illustration

County of San Diego Animal Services and the District Attorney’s Office announced the prosecution of a man for felony animal abuse and neglect after he failed to seek care for his injured dog.

While responding to another call to service, Lt. Natalie Harrington found an injured dog in Campo. When she arrived, she found Eagle, a young female Belgian Malinois, with a severely injured leg.

Lt. Harrington acquired a warrant to impound the dog. Eagle was then taken to Animal Services for treatment with a veterinarian. Due to the nature of the injury and to protect Eagle’s health, the leg was amputated. Eagle was treated by a specialist using advanced tools, including laser technology, to perform the surgery and speed recovery.

Eagle was back on her feet in three days, healing quickly, and is waiting to be adopted by a new family. Eagle’s \$2,900 treatment was covered by the Spirit Fund, a Veterinary Medical fund to treat animals in need of help or expensive veterinary care. You can learn more about the Spirit Fund on the Animal Services website .

“County Animal Services protects the health, safety and welfare of people and animals in unincorporated San Diego County,” said Animal Services Director Vaughn Maurice. “Thanks to help from the community and the dedication of our Animal Services officers and staff, animals like Eagle get the care they need and the opportunity for a new start with a loving

family.”

Animal Services envisions a safe, thriving community where all people and animals in San Diego County have access to essential animal care and support services.

The department also provides 24-hour public safety response to help injured animals, investigate reports of animal abuse, and protect the public from aggressive animals.

County of San Diego news release · Jun 17, 2025



Illustration from a photo by Edward O'Connor (hober) · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

COUNTY

Registrar Reminds District One Voters to Vote Early for Special General Election

If you’re a registered voter living in the County of San Diego’s First Supervisorial District and haven’t cast your ballot yet, you’ll soon get a reminder that you have less than two weeks to vote in the July 1 special general election .

The Registrar sent over 335,000 reminder postcards to registered voters in District 1 who had not voted as of June 11.

The person elected will fill the district’s vacant seat for the remainder of the current term that ends in January 2029. Only those who live in the district can vote in the election.

District 1 runs from the Pacific Ocean to the Otay and San Miguel mountains

in the east, and from Barrio Logan in the north to the U.S./Mexico international border on the south. The district includes the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and some communities within the City of San Diego, including Barrio Logan, East Village, Golden Hill and more. It also includes the unincorporated areas of Bonita, East Otay Mesa, Lincoln Acres, Sunnyside, La Presa, and parts of Spring Valley.

If you’re not sure if you live in District 1, you can look it up at sdvote.com .

Don’t delay! If you have been holding onto your ballot, act now. You can vote from home and return your ballot through the mail – no postage needed – or to any of the Registrar’s 29 official ballot drop boxes around the district. Remember to sign and date your return ballot envelope. You must sign your return envelope for your vote to be counted.

The Registrar’s official ballot drop boxes are open 24 hours a day up until 8 p.m. on the final day of voting, July 1. Visit sdvote.com to check the location list or the locator map to find a location near you.

Early voting is already underway at the Registrar’s office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Registrar’s office will be closed on Thursday, June 19, in observance of Juneteenth.

The sooner the Registrar’s office receives your ballot, the sooner it is processed for the first release of election night results.

Additional options to vote in person will begin Saturday, June 21, with the opening of seven vote centers . They will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until the final day of voting, Tuesday, July 1, when 13 vote centers will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

You can find a vote center or an official ballot drop box near you inside

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Registrar Reminds District One Voters to Vote Early for Special General Election

your voter information pamphlet, or you can look up your pamphlet online with the View Voter Information Pamphlet (Sample Ballot) tool at sdvote.com. Some vote center locations have changed since the primary election in April, so check the list of locations before you head out to cast your ballot.

Learn more about voting in the District 1 special general election at sdvote.com, or call (858) 565-5800 or toll free at (800) 696-0136.

County of San Diego news release · Jun 17, 2025

COUNTY
County Releases Revised Recommended Budget

The County’s revised recommended budget for fiscal year 2025 – 26, also called the change letter , is now available, reflecting feedback

from the public and Board of Supervisors.

It includes an increase of \$18.3 million or 0.2% to the May 1 recommended budget plan for a total of \$8.63 billion. That is an increase of \$104.1 million or 1.2% from the previous fiscal year.

The revised recommended budget also decreases staffing by one additional staff year, an overall decrease of 191 staff years in the coming year, bringing the total of County employees to 20,280.25 staff years.

The reduction is being done through attrition, eliminating some vacant positions and streamlining some operations.

The recommended budget, including the revisions, is balanced and ensures core, mandated services remain strong, while prioritizing meaningful investments in behavioral health, public safety, and strategies to increase efficiency during challenging fiscal conditions to create stability in uncertain circumstances.

Changes in federal and State policies and funding could significantly impact County operations. The County continues to carefully monitor how shifts may affect funding streams and program mandates and will consider budget adjustments as needed.

\$0.8 million for LGBTQ+ for the Innovative Housing and Supports contract

\$0.6 million increase for the Domestic Violence Shelter Based Program

\$0.5 million to extend the ¡Mas Fresco! Plus program

\$0.3 million increase for Tenant Legal Services to help tenants facing eviction

\$4.1 million increase for: Road improvements

Flood control stormwater maintenance zones

Upgrading the Keys Creek Channel in Fallbrook

Continued efforts in the Sheriff’s Office to support the Opioid Enforcement Program and an increase of \$13.2 million in grant funding to: Support behavioral health

and pre-release services for justice involved adults

Maintain contracted services, software licenses and equipment for State and federal security

Deliberations and adoption for the budget are scheduled for Tuesday, June 24. The Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget would take effect July 1.

Residents can also watch, listen and participate during the budget deliberations.

The meetings will take place in room 310 at the County Administration Center located at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101.

Spanish language translation services for public speakers are available at Board meetings.

Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Persian (including Farsi, Dari), Somali, Spanish, Tagalog (including Filipino), and Vietnamese translations of the overall proceedings are also available upon request at least 72 hours prior to the

meeting. Contact the Clerk’s office at (619) 531-5434 or email PublicComment@sdcounty.ca.gov .

The live stream broadcast online may be delayed by 45 seconds or more depending on the service and your internet connection.

Agenda Web Stream (Available live and archived several hours later)

County YouTube Channel (Closed captions available)

Cox South Channel 24 or Cox North Channel 19

Call in to (619) 531-4716 for a listen-only line to the live Board meeting while it is in session.

To speak during the live meeting by phone, fill out the Board of Supervisors tele-comments form and submit it before the meeting starts. After submitting the form, you will receive instructions on how to call in to the meeting.

County of San Diego news release · Jun 13, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration from a photo by Adbar · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

BUSINESS
Member Spotlight: Von Consulting

VON Consulting: HR Expertise, Now Supporting Businesses in San Diego

Founded in 2003, VON Consulting is a trusted provider of human resources and technology services, supporting companies across Europe and now expanding into the San Diego business community . With over two decades of experience in IT recruitment, HR consulting, and workforce solutions, VON Consulting delivers tailored services that help organizations grow efficiently and compliantly.

IT recruitment and outsourcing – sourcing top-tier tech talent for development, infrastructure, and support roles

HR administration and payroll – full-service solutions for personnel records, compliance, and salary processing

HR consultancy – expert

guidance on labor law, internal procedures, salary benchmarks, and HR strategy

Interested to expand your team or expand operations in East Europe ? Let us know.

As part of our mission to support small and midsize businesses, we’ve launched vonStaff.com , an easy-to-use employee management platform designed specifically for companies with 5 to 200 employees . vonStaff simplifies how businesses manage their internal teams—without the overhead of traditional enterprise HR systems.

Policy distribution and document management

Shift planning, time tracking, and leave management

End-of-month reporting for payroll accuracy

vonStaff.com is free for teams of up to 5 employees , with a simple pricing model of \$2 per employee/month beyond that . It’s a scalable, cost-effective way to stay organized, compliant, and focused on business growth.

VON Consulting is proud to bring its proven experience and innovative tools to San Diego. We welcome chamber members to explore how our services—and vonStaff—can help streamline operations and empower local businesses to thrive.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jun 9, 2025

BUSINESS
From the Desk of Veronica Perondi – June 2025

May 1 st officially marked my one-year anniversary in the role of Executive Director at LEAD San Diego, and what a remarkable year it has been. I’m filled with gratitude and excitement as I reflect on the time that has passed, it feels like a lifetime and just yesterday, all at the same time.

On May 1 st , I also had the honor of presenting to Rotary San Diego, Club 33, where I shared my vision for LEAD and reflected on its incredible 42- year history. I was introduced by Phil Blair (83), a graduate of the first LEAD cohort in 1983, a recipient of the first LEAD Graduate of the YEAR award and a three-time LEAD Board Chair. There were many in the room who have been part of LEADs history, and whose support and mentorship have meant so much to me over the past year.

In preparing for the presentation, I looked back at historical documents and annual reports and one quote from the 1985-86 annual report stood out:

“LEAD Alumni can be found volunteering for all

kinds of projects, programs, committees and boards. They are assisting every major institution in our county”

The same can still be said today, 40+ years later. The LEAD network is unparalleled and it’s the type of people that are drawn to LEAD that make it so unique. LEAD attracts those who are eager to learn, to expand their knowledge and to make a meaningful difference. These are the individuals who form the foundation of our community – a network of changemakers.

One of the most rewarding parts of my role is recognizing the outstanding leadership that contributes to our community. I’d like to celebrate the 2025 Visionary Award Honorees, each of whom exemplifies strong leadership for the greater good of our region:

The Neil Morgan Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement – Walt Ekard, Former County of San Diego Chief Administrative Officer (posthumously)

LEAD Graduate of the Year – Jim Gruny (23), Community Relations Officer, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego

Innovation & Economic Opportunity Award – Dr. Ellen Neufeldt, President CSU

San Marcos

The Ronald Kendrick Memorial Award for Regional Collaboration – Kerri Verbeke Kapich (17), Chief Operating Officer, San Diego Tourism Authority

The Charles Nathanson Memorial Award for Cross-Border Region Building – Dr. Mark Sanchez (21), President/Superintendent, Southwestern Community College District

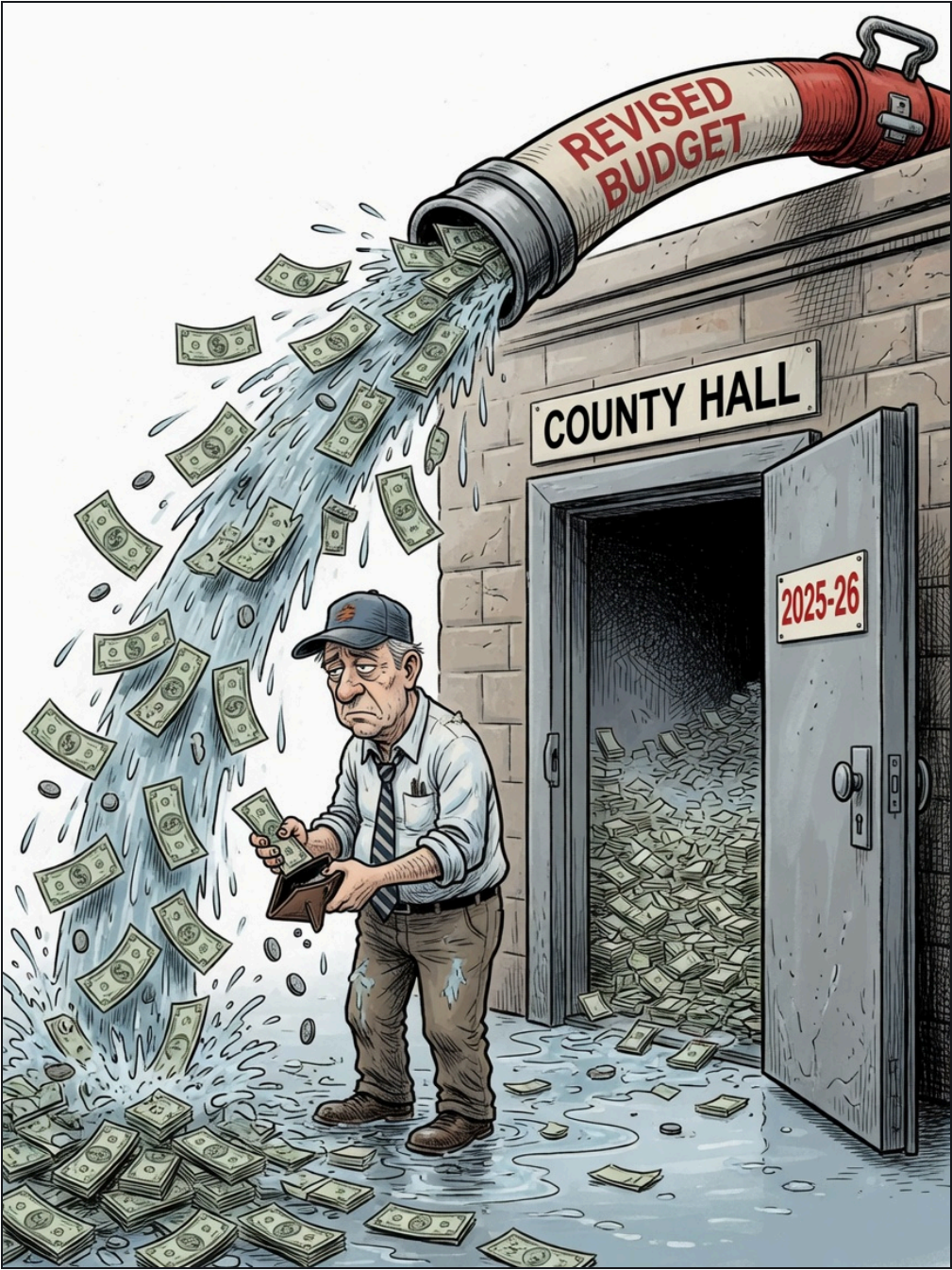
These individuals have demonstrated dedication, innovation and a commitment to shaping a better future for our region. Their leadership is a testament to the power of vision and purpose and LEAD San Diego is proud to honor them for their contributions.

LEAD San Diego is also excited to welcome in new leadership with Chris Cate, who recently started his role as the President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and LEAD San Diego. I, along with the LEAD Board of Directors, look forward to working alongside him to take LEAD to new heights.

I also want to thank the LEAD network for welcoming me with open arms. I’m eager to see where the next year will take us.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jun 5, 2025

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Same flood, new label.

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

COMMENTARY

VTa Illustrates How Special Interests Trump Public Good, Argues California Policy Center Researcher

Athan Joshi contends that the Valley Transportation Authority's exploding deficits, collapsing ridership and soaring labor costs show how unions and insiders capture tax dollars at the expense of effective transit service.

The Valley Transportation Authority has become a textbook example of government mismanagement and crony politics that favor insiders over the public, according to Athan Joshi, a visiting research assistant at the California Policy Center.

In its latest draft budget for fiscal year 2027, the VTA projects a \$14.9 million deficit, up sharply from an \$868,000 shortfall the previous year, Joshi writes. He attributes the growing gap to years of declining ridership, unchecked labor cost increases and heavier reliance on taxes paid by county residents.

Ridership, which Joshi calls the lifeblood of any transit agency, peaked at 43.944

million trips in fiscal year 2015, well before the pandemic. By fiscal year 2019 it had already dropped more than 19 percent, and current projections for fiscal year 2025 show ridership 40 percent below that 2015 high, he reports, citing VTA data.

The agency now forecasts a nearly 15 percent ridership rebound in fiscal year 2026, but Joshi says that optimism is unsupported by history or recent trends, noting that fiscal year 2025 numbers are already down from the prior year.

While ridership has collapsed, labor costs have soared. Employee expenses rose 47 percent from \$289 million in fiscal year 2015 to \$427 million in fiscal year 2025, even as the workforce grew 8 percent while serving 40 percent fewer passengers, according to Joshi.

Local sales taxes, which make up more than 80 percent of VTA revenue, have increased thanks to Santa Clara County's tech economy. Yet nearly all of the added money has gone to higher pay and more staff rather than improved service, he argues.

Joshi points out that sales tax revenue, including funds from the 2016 Measure B, rose

\$149 million between fiscal years 2015 and 2025, while labor costs climbed \$137.5 million, absorbing almost the entire increase.

As a result, labor cost per rider has jumped 2.5 times, from \$6.50 per trip in fiscal year 2015 to \$16 in fiscal year 2025. That 146 percent rise in labor expense per passenger far outpaces the one-third increase in the Consumer Price Index over the same period, he writes.

Voters approved Measure B, a half-cent sales tax, in 2016 with 72 percent support on the promise it would enhance transit and help fund projects such as the BART Silicon Valley extension. Instead, the funds have largely been absorbed by growing payrolls rather than delivering the reliable system promised, according to the California Policy Center researcher.

Rather than focusing on practical improvements such as more frequent buses or modernized light rail, VTA continues to pursue costly megaprojects like the BART extension that Joshi says promise little ridership gain for billions spent.

He cites a 2024 state audit of the \$653 million Eastridge light rail extension, which

projected only a 1.5 percent ridership increase by 2043, calling the \$272 million per mile of track difficult to justify.

A recent strike by the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265, which forced VTA to file a legal complaint over a broken "no-strike" clause in March 2025, further illustrates the agency's dysfunctional priorities and the entitled mindset of public-sector unions, Joshi contends.

With farebox recovery at just 5 percent and ridership stuck at 60 percent of its peak, the agency's refusal to address structural problems guarantees larger deficits and continued burdens on taxpayers, he writes.

Joshi concludes that the VTA's troubles represent a microcosm of California's public-sector dysfunction, "a system where special interests, unions, government bureaucrats, and their political allies line their pockets while public services stay mediocre." Santa Clara County deserves better, he adds.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jun 13, 2025

COMMENTARY

California High-Speed Rail Defense Raises Doubts on Funding and Projections

Marc Joffe finds the rail authority's rebuttal to federal funding cuts contains some valid points but relies on shaky assumptions about money and ridership.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority issued a 14-page response on June 12 challenging the Federal Railroad Administration's move to withdraw \$4 billion in grants. While the authority promised a fuller reply next month, the initial document already offers much to examine, according to Marc Joffe.

Joffe, president of the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association and a visiting fellow at the California Policy Center, writes that several points in the authority's letter hold up reasonably well. He notes that the agency effectively counters the FRA's assertion of "minimal progress to advance construction" by highlighting numerous structures already finished or nearing completion.

Joffe argues that online critics have overstated the

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

California High-Speed Rail Defense Raises Doubts on Funding and Projections

project's shortcomings, such as the false notion that \$11 billion went solely toward a single 1,600-foot bridge. In reality, contractors have finished most groundwork needed to lay tracks across the first 119 miles of the route.

Yet Joffe contends the authority stands on less solid footing when addressing the FRA finding that the agency is unlikely to meet its target for an early operating segment between Merced and Bakersfield by the end of 2033. The authority reaffirmed its pledge to finish electrified high-speed infrastructure and begin passenger service by Dec. 31, 2033.

Joffe notes that completing that segment would require about \$7 billion in new money, as the agency's inspector general has pointed out. The FRA states the authority lacks any credible plan to close this gap beyond requesting more federal

support.

In its letter, the authority highlights Gov. Gavin Newsom's idea to prolong the state's cap-and-trade program until 2045 and direct \$1 billion per year to the rail effort. This would supply only \$3.5 billion in fresh revenue between mid-2030 and the 2033 deadline, since earlier collections are already factored into current estimates, leaving half the needed sum unaccounted for.

The authority also mentions efforts to attract private investment by monetizing elements like train cars, stations, track rights, fiber optics and property. But Joffe observes that private funding has been an objective since voters backed the project in 2008. Given the repeated shortfalls in performance, he questions why investors would commit now.

Additionally, the authority promises upcoming cost-reduction measures in a future report. It remains to be seen whether those steps can counterbalance a fresh \$3.2 billion overrun recently disclosed by KCRA.

Joffe points out that the Federal Railroad Administration has raised significant concerns about the authority's ridership projections, which have long been viewed as overly optimistic. In 2008 the Reason Foundation sharply critiqued forecasts of 65.5 million to 96.5 million annual riders by 2030, calling them "absurdly high" and "among the most unrealistic projections produced for a major transport project anywhere in the world."

For the current debate over 2023 grant requests, Joffe examines newer numbers from the authority's application, which projected 31.3 million riders in 2040. That figure aligns with the 2023 project update but was later trimmed to 28.4 million. However, the benefit-cost analysis submitted to federal officials used a higher estimate of 33.75 million riders, inflating claimed benefits.

Both sides acknowledge that even the revised forecast exceeds double the current ridership on the Northeast Corridor. The authority attributes this to its faster

220-mph trains compared with the Acela. Joffe counters that this advantage is outweighed by denser populations, superior connecting transit and established rail habits in the Northeast.

Beyond inflated ridership, Joffe argues that the authority's benefit-cost analysis rests on other questionable premises. For instance, it attributes \$11.8 billion in increased property values near stations served by the Phase I project, yet includes appreciation around San Francisco's Salesforce Transit Center, which is not part of this project.

The analysis also projected a reduction of 1.29 million tons in greenhouse gas emissions for 2040, a number the authority later cut to 0.61 million tons. Joffe suspects the original calculation overlooked the anticipated shift to electric vehicles across most California driving by that year, which emit no tailpipe pollution.

While the authority may identify flaws in the federal review when it submits its detailed response, Joffe doubts it will sway the Trump

administration. He predicts the matter will likely head to court, where proceedings could drag on for years and, given the current Supreme Court, probably will not favor the authority.

Joffe concludes that California officials should set aside political passions and commission an independent review of the project's costs and benefits using neutral assumptions. If, as he expects, expenses exceed gains, leaders should scale back the effort, perhaps by finishing the initial 119-mile stretch, linking it to existing Amtrak San Joaquin trains and ending further expansion.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jun 13, 2025

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first — City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals and our standards at sandiegonewsline.com.

MORE NEWS

COUNTY

Register to Vote by June 16 for District One Special General Election

If you live in the County of San Diego's First Supervisorial District and want to vote in the July 1 special general election , you must register by Monday, June 16 to receive a ballot in the mail.

Otherwise, you will need to make a trip in person to a vote center in the district starting Saturday, June 21 to conditionally register and vote provisionally through July 1.

The person elected will fill the district's vacant seat for the remainder of the current term that ends in January 2029. Only those who live in the district can vote in the election.

District 1 runs from the Pacific Ocean to the Otay and San Miguel mountains in the east, and from Barrio Logan in the north to the U.S./Mexico international border on the south. The district includes the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and some communities within the City of San Diego, including Barrio Logan, East Village, Golden Hill and more. It also includes the unincorporated areas of Bonita, East Otay Mesa,

Lincoln Acres, Sunnyside, La Presa, and parts of Spring Valley.

If you're not sure if you live in District 1, you can look it up at sdvote.com .

Registering to vote is quick and easy and can be done online at sdvote.com. You will need to register to vote if you:

If your signature is confirmed through records at the California Department of Motor Vehicles, your registration will automatically be sent to the Registrar's office. If your signature is not confirmed, you can print the form, sign it and return it to the Registrar's office by 5 p.m. on June 16.

Registration forms must be postmarked or delivered to the Registrar's office by June 16. Voters may also register online until midnight.

If you don't have access to a computer, you may request a registration form by calling (800) 696-0136 or emailing rovmail@sdcountry.ca.gov .

Not sure if you're registered to vote? Check your registration status online at sdvote.com.

For voters who need language assistance, voting materials are also available in Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Early voting is already underway at the Registrar's office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday through Friday. The Registrar's office will be closed on Thursday, June 19, in observance of Juneteenth.

Additional options to vote in person will begin Saturday, June 21, with the opening of seven vote centers . They will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until the final day of voting, Tuesday, July 1, when 13 vote centers and the Registrar's office will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

You can find a vote center or an official ballot drop box near you inside your voter information pamphlet, or you can look up your pamphlet online with the View Voter Information Pamphlet (Sample Ballot) tool at sdvote.com. Some vote center locations have changed since the primary election in April, so check the list of locations before you head out to cast your ballot.

Learn more about voting in the District 1 special general election at sdvote.com, or call (858) 565-5800 or toll free at (800) 696-0136.

County of San Diego news release · Jun 13, 2025

COUNTY

County Seeks Young Adults for Emergency Medical Services Training Program

Young adults with backgrounds in the juvenile

justice or child welfare systems have a new opportunity to launch a career in emergency medical services.

The County's Fire and Emergency Medical Services are recruiting applicants ages 18 to 26 for the San Diego Emergency Medical Services Corps—a five-month, hands-on training program that prepares participants to become emergency medical technicians.

Almost 40 prospective applicants attended a County Fire hosted in-person outreach event Tuesday at the County Health and Human Services Agency's South Region facility in Chula Vista.

In partnership with Southwestern College and American Medical Response, the event gave prospective applicants a chance to meet working EMTs and paramedics, learn about the field and try out lifesaving skills such as compression-only CPR and bleeding control.

The first group of students begin training on July 7th. While the deadline to apply for the July cohort has passed, applications are open for two future sessions in January and June 2026. Twenty students will be accepted into each session.

Participants will be enrolled as Southwestern

College students and receive a \$1,500 monthly stipend. The program combines classroom instruction, hands-on skills training and regular opportunities to ride-along with local ambulance providers while they are in-service.

"This program is longer than a typical three-month EMT course and includes additional hands-on training," said EMS Program Coordinator Tareq Haidari. "It's specifically designed for youth impacted by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems who are looking for a pathway into a career in emergency medical services."

EMS Corps Program Manager Nicholas Bye-Carnes emphasized that the training focuses on active learning over lectures, which helps students retain and apply what they learn.

Support for participants doesn't end at graduation. Through community-based nonprofit organization SBCS, students will receive job placement assistance, mentorship, career coaching and help purchasing essential equipment.

The County is actively seeking applicants from diverse backgrounds. To learn more and apply, visit sandiegoemscorps.org .

County of San Diego news release · Jun 17, 2025