



Stanislaus-San Joaquin Bi-County Special Districts Association

Advocacy in Action to Protect Local Services

California Special Districts Association joined local fire service leadership in a critical statewide advocacy effort to protect local revenues that fund essential public services.

On April 27, 2026, CSDA Legislative Representative Marcus Detwiler and Fire Chief Eric DeHart of Ripon Fire Protection District testified before the California State Senate Transportation Committee in opposition to a proposal tied to the California High-Speed Rail Authority's Draft 2026 Business Plan.

The Issue: Diversion of Local Property Tax Revenue

At the center of the discussion is a proposed use of tax increment financing (TIF). Under this approach, future growth in property tax revenues would be redirected away from local agencies to help fund the state's high-speed rail project.

This mechanism would effectively freeze current local tax revenues and divert future growth, even as demand for services continues to rise.

CSDA and its coalition partners raised concerns that this proposal could significantly impact local governments, including special districts that rely heavily on property tax revenue to fund operations.

Local Impact

Chief DeHart provided direct testimony on how this proposal could affect fire protection districts serving communities like Ripon, which serves approximately 22,000 residents.

He emphasized that diverting future property tax growth would place districts under increasing financial strain, particularly as they work to maintain fire suppression, emergency response, and community safety services while costs and service demands continue to grow. This concern is especially significant given the state's broader priority of strengthening wildfire response and emergency preparedness.

A Unified Voice for Local Agencies

CSDA was joined by a coalition of statewide organizations, including the League of California Cities, California State Association of Counties, Urban Counties of California, Rural County Representatives of California, and the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts in submitting formal opposition to the proposal.

Together, these organizations emphasized a shared principle:

Local revenues should remain local to support the communities they are intended to serve.

Property tax revenue is a foundational funding source for local governments and special districts across California. These funds directly support services such as:

- Fire protection, emergency response and health care
- Parks and recreation
- Water, wastewater, and infrastructure services

Redirecting future growth in these revenues could limit the ability of local agencies to:

- Keep pace with population growth
- Maintain service levels
- Plan for long-term community needs

As part of this advocacy effort, CSDA encouraged special districts and stakeholders to submit public comments on the Draft 2026 Business Plan before the close of the public comment period on April 29, 2026.

This effort highlights the critical role special districts play, not only in delivering essential services, but in advocating for the resources necessary to sustain them. Through coordinated advocacy and strong local leadership, districts across California continue to ensure that decisions impacting local services are made with the communities they serve in mind.