

Per California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 548.5, the following information will be posted to CalHR's Career Executive Assignment Action Proposals website for 30 calendar days when departments propose new CEA concepts or major revisions to existing CEA concepts. Presence of the department-submitted CEA Action Proposal information on CalHR's website does not indicate CalHR support for the proposal.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date

December 18,
2024

2. Department

California State Transportation Agency

3. Organizational Placement (Division/Branch/Office Name)

Communications

4. CEA Position Title

Assistant Deputy Secretary for Communications

5. Summary of proposed position description and how it relates to the program's mission or purpose.
(2-3 sentences)

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) develops and coordinates California's transportation policies and programs to achieve the state's mobility, safety, equity and environmental sustainability objectives. Our agency oversees the policies and activities of California's eight state organizations that deliver transportation-related programs and services and support the movement of people and goods throughout the state. The following transportation-related entities are under CalSTA: Board of Pilot Commissioners, California Highway Patrol, California Transportation Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Motor Vehicles, High-Speed Rail Authority, Office of Traffic Safety and the New Motor Vehicle Board.

Under the direction of the Deputy Secretary for Communications, the Assistant Deputy Secretary for Communications is responsible for managing, developing and implementing the communications functions of the California State Transportation Agency and the organizations under its umbrella. This position includes oversight of public communications from CalSTA's departments, boards and authorities, and provides advice and expertise on all communications activities related to CalSTA and its mission and programs.

6. Reports to: (Class Title/Level)

Deputy Secretary for Communications

7. Relationship with Department Director (Select one)

- ☒ Member of department's Executive Management Team, and has frequent contact with director on a wide range of department-wide issues.
- ☐ Not a member of department's Executive Management Team but has frequent contact with the Executive Management Team on policy issues.

(Explain):

8. Organizational Level (Select one)

- ☐ 1st ☐ 2nd ☒ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ 5th (mega departments only - 17,001+ allocated positions)

B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST

9. What are the duties and responsibilities of the CEA position? Be specific and provide examples.

- Manages the daily operation of CalSTA's communications functions, including: reviewing, writing, editing and developing responses to media and public inquiries received by CalSTA and its departments, boards and authorities; preparing policies and editing daily talking points, speeches, op-eds and public presentations from CalSTA and its senior staff; researching, writing, editing and reviewing web content for posting on CalSTA's website; reviewing and editing news releases and reports from CalSTA and its departments, boards and authorities.
- Provides expertise to oversee and create policies on communications activities and media relations to CalSTA's senior staff and the public affairs offices of CalSTA's departments, boards and authorities.
- Provides policy guidance and develops written materials on CalSTA's positions consistent with its mission and goals.
- Coordinates and oversees CalSTA's web-related activities, including the development and administration of CalSTA's website content, video content and social media postings, develop related policies.
- Assists the Deputy Secretary of Communications in the strategies to advance CalSTA's mission and goals with its stakeholders, including its departments, boards and authorities, members of the public including constituents and the business community, and the Legislature.
- Provides staff support to the CalSTA Secretary and senior staff related to public events, presentations and reports.

B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST (continued)

10. How critical is the program's mission or purpose to the department's mission as a whole? Include a description of the degree to which the program is critical to the department's mission.

- ☒ Program is directly related to department's primary mission and is critical to achieving the department's goals.
- ☐ Program is indirectly related to department's primary mission.
- ☐ Program plays a supporting role in achieving department's mission (i.e., budget, personnel, other admin functions).

Description: The Assistant Deputy Secretary for Communications position is critical to the success of the California State Transportation Agency's (CalSTA's) mission. This role directly oversees the execution and implementation of several of CalSTA's primary communications objectives, which are integral to achieving CalSTA's core strategic goals. This position ensures that agency level projects related to communications are aligned with the goals of CalSTA and coordinated among cross functional teams in all CalSTA departments, boards and authorities. This position drives the timely delivery of communications initiatives and is vital to proper communication through and to the Governor's Office. Without this position, CalSTA's ability to meet its mission objectives would be significantly hindered as this position provides essential oversight, problem solving and leadership in the communications program. The effectiveness and efficiency of this role is central to CalSTA's mission and CalSTA relies heavily on the expertise and guidance of the individual in this role to work with Departments, Boards, Authorities, and, importantly, the Governor's Office.

High level contacts for this position include the CalSTA Deputy Secretary for Communications and members of CalSTA's senior staff, Governor's Office, particularly Communications, the Press Office and External Affairs, Public Information Officers from the CalSTA Departments, Media, the public, and stakeholders in the public and private sectors, partners in other Federal, State and local government agencies and departments and stakeholders across all Organizations.

B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST (continued)

11. Describe what has changed that makes this request necessary. Explain how the change justifies the current request. Be specific and provide examples.

CalSTA is requesting that this position be classified a CEA instead of a Governor's Exempt appointment due to the need for sustained policy-making efforts and strategic continuity within CalSTA. The incumbent will play a pivotal role with developing and implementing policies that align both with Agency goals and broader State initiatives. This reclassification to CEA is in response to a directive from the Governor's office which aims to streamline our organization structure by reducing the number of exempt entitlements across the State. There is an anticipated vacancy so it is an opportune moment to make this change.

Designating this position as a CEA will ensure that we attract and retain a qualified candidate pool with necessary expertise and experience in policy-making and communications. Filling this position at CEA level is essential for maintaining the current momentum of our policy development to make sure policies are carried out effectively over time. Additionally, as a CEA, the position will be better aligned with CalSTA's long term strategic planning and policy development processes, allowing CalSTA to work towards achieving its mission and providing expertise to stakeholders and the Governor's Office.

C. ROLE IN POLICY INFLUENCE

12. Provide 3-5 specific examples of policy areas over which the CEA position will be the principle policy maker. Each example should cite a policy that would have an identifiable impact. Include a description of the statewide impact of the assigned program.

1. Public Relations Policy: Developing a communication plan to manage a CalSTA Board's, Departments' and Authority's response to an unexpected negative event, such as a roadway mishap or a California Highway Patrol (CHP) fatality. This includes preparing press releases, setting up media briefings and trainings to spokespersons to effectively convey CalSTA's message. This involves a proactive approach to effectively respond to any issues that may arise. The statewide impact will be to manage reputation and build positive relationships with the public, media, Governor's office and other stakeholders.

2. Internal Communications Policy: Reviewing any existing, as well as creating new policy, that establishes clear communication channels for updates to Governor's Office, Department of Finance, CalSTA successes and challenges. Such communications can include the Week Ahead reports, and the Day ahead reports, as well as media mentions. The obligation here is to provide effective and transparent communication with CalSTA and all of the Departments, Board and Authority under the CalSTA umbrella. This will foster a cohesive workplace and will align the employees with CalSTA's goals and values. This will impact productivity and morale.

3. Social Media Policy: Establishing guidelines and policies related to social media presence, including rules about what can be posted on behalf of CalSTA, CalSTA employees and other CalSTA organizations. Guidance may include things such as how to handle negative stories, responses, and how to convey a professional tone. This will ensure a consistent and professional online presence that aligns with CalSTA and the Governor's Office brand and values.

4. Crisis Response Policy: This position must ensure policies are in place to effectively respond during a crisis, minimizing damage to the reputation of CalSTA, its umbrella organizations, and making sure to maintain stakeholder trust by creating effective communication channels with the Governor's Office, and other external state entities. Such crises in the past have included freeway shutdowns due to fire, flooding, or bridge collapses.

C. ROLE IN POLICY INFLUENCE (continued)

13. What is the CEA position's scope and nature of decision-making authority?

The scope of the position will include strategic communications planning, public relations and media management, "brand" management, internal communication, crisis communication, and stakeholder engagement.

The above scope includes collaborative partnerships with the CalSTA Deputy Secretary for Communications and members of CalSTA's senior staff, Governor's Office (particularly Communications, the Press Office and External Affairs), Public Information Officers from the CalSTA organizations, the media, the public, and stakeholders in the public and private sectors, partners in other Federal, State and local government Agencies and Departments, and stakeholders across all CalSTA Departments. The nature of decision making authority for this position will include the authority to develop and implement the CalSTA communication strategy, decision-making over the messaging, channels, and tactics used to achieve the CalSTA communication goals, authority to make immediate decisions during a crisis to manage CalSTA and CalSTA organizations' responses, authority to coordinate with CalSTA organizations and others state organization to ensure a unified approach and response, final approval on communication material, including press releases, social media postings, and the authority to ensure all content aligns with CalSTA messaging guidelines. This position will also develop and enforce communication policies, and act as an official spokesperson for CalSTA (representing CalSTA in media interviews, public appearances and at events.)

This position plays a crucial role in shaping and managing CalSTA and CalSTA organizations' public image, ensuring effective internal and external communication, navigating the complex landscape of media and public relations. This position requires strong leadership, strategic thinking, and the ability to make critical decisions that impact CalSTA, its reputation and its success.

14. Will the CEA position be developing and implementing new policy, or interpreting and implementing existing policy? How?

This CEA position, since it is not a new position to CalSTA, but a newly requested CEA position, will be continuing to implement and interpret existing policy, but will also be developing and implementing new policy as needs arise. Policy areas include, but are not limited to: Internal Communications, Public Relations, Social Media and Crisis Response. Additional policy making areas may arise through further alignment with the CalSTA Strategic Plan and as circumstances dictate.