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Scorecard grades California rail transit stations Finds Sacramento Regional Transit stations lacking

*Walkability, downtown-like environments contribute to transit station success
Successful transit systems reap higher regional economic, environmental rewards*

SACRAMENTO — A new analysis of California’s rail transit systems discovers which transit stations serve as hubs of thriving, walkable areas that encourage residents and workers alike to ride the train, and which station areas need improvement.

[Grading California’s Rail Transit Station Areas](http://www.next10.org), issued by the nonprofit nonpartisan group Next 10 (www.next10.org) and prepared by the Center for Law, Energy and the Environment (CLEE) at the UC Berkeley School of Law assigns a grade to all 30 stations in the Sacramento Regional Transit (SacRT) system. Overall, the system’s average score for its station areas tied for third best with Los Angeles among the state’s six major rail transit systems.

“Top-performing transit stations tend to be located in the center of downtown-like environments and thriving, rail-oriented neighborhoods. These stations provide access to housing, shopping, places of work and other amenities,” said Next 10 founder F. Noel Perry. “Most low-performing stations are on the outer edges of rail systems, often situated in low-density, industrial or auto-oriented neighborhoods.”

Highlights for SacRT include:

- The 7th and K Street station performed best overall in the SacRT, receiving an A-average for its downtown environment, accessibility to amenities and walkability.
- The Longview Drive and I-80 station performed the worst in the system, scoring an F for lack of ridership and located in a car-dependent area with no tailored local land use policy.
- Notably, this station is primarily used for park-and-ride services adjacent to a major interstate, as opposed to fostering a vibrant transit neighborhood.
- While none of SacRT’s stations received a failing grade, 11 stations scored a D.
- The top ten stations all serve primarily employees getting to and from places of work.

“Stations serving walkable neighborhoods with plenty of conveniently located homes and businesses scored highest,” said Ethan Elkind, lead author and associate director of the Climate Change and Business Program at CLEE. “Neighborhoods that provide these local amenities encourage ridership. And the more demand, the better the economic performance of the transit system.”



The report divided rail transit station areas into three types: residential, employment and mixed and calculated grades based on 11 key indicators including walkability, ridership levels, existing land-use and permitting policies, affordability and transit quality.

“We hope that grading the state’s rail transit station areas for how well they encourage ridership and create vibrant, rail-oriented neighborhoods will help highlight best practices,” said Perry. “Transit provides an opportunity to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, take cars off the road, and protect open space, which is important given that the state’s population is expected to increase by nearly 30 percent over the next 35 years.”

Researchers analyzed 489 neighborhoods within a half-mile radius of stations in six California rail transit systems and offered recommendations to improve station area performance, including prioritizing rail transit for neighborhoods that already contain high concentrations of jobs and housing and financing development projects in under-performing regions.

A few statewide highlights include:

- San Francisco’s Market Street and Church Street station scored a chart-topping A+ thanks to a near-perfect walkability score and a high rate of transit use and zero-vehicle households in a half-mile radius around the station.
- San Diego’s Gillespie Field Station, located in a car-dependent area, received an F—the lowest mark in the state—scoring poorly across the board. Especially notable: its significant lack of ridership among residents and workers.
- The Los Angeles area’s best-scoring station is LA Metro’s Westlake/ MacArthur Park station, which scores high on diversity of destinations, walkability, transit access, and affordability, but gets a poor safety score because of crime.
- The San Joaquin Valley is California’s fastest-growing region, but lacks rail transit. Researchers analyzed key busy bus station areas instead, awarding them separate grades ranging from B to D.
- Of the six transit systems evaluated, MUNI scored a B, the statewide highest average station area grade. MUNI was followed by BART, which earned a B-; Los Angeles Metro Rail and Sacramento Regional Transit both scored C; and San Diego Metropolitan Transit and Santa Clara VTA both scored C-.

About Next 10

Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization that educates, engages and empowers Californians to improve the state’s future. With a focus on the intersection between the economy, the environment, and quality of life, Next 10 employs research from leading experts on complex state issues and creates a portfolio of nonpartisan educational materials to foster a deeper understanding of the critical issues affecting our state.



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The Center for Law, Energy & the Environment channels the expertise of the UC Berkeley community into pragmatic law and policy solutions to pressing environmental and energy issues. The Center's current initiatives focus on climate change, sustainable land use, healthy oceans, and clean water for California's future.