

Railroad Development

The first transcontinental railroad connecting California to the East Coast was completed in 1868. This route through Donner Pass is still in use today. Rails quickly spread throughout the San Francisco Bay area, Central Valley, and south to Mexico. They made it easier for settlers to reach California and for **minerals** and **agricultural** products to be shipped east.





To pay for the construction of the railroads, the federal government granted ownership of land along the routes to the railroad companies. The land was divided up like a giant checkerboard with the railroads and government owning alternate plots of land. In several areas of California, you can still see this pattern (see the Federal Lands map on the next page).

As California's population and agricultural output increased, the railroad network also initially increased. In the twentieth century, however, a shift to other modes of transportation saw some lines go out of use. In 2008, California citizens voted to fund the construction of high-speed rail between San Francisco and Los Angeles, though more than ten years later only small parts of that system have been built. High costs make it uncertain whether it will be completed.

Image below: Chinese laborers were essential in the rapid and successful completion of the railroads that connected California to the east coast. This statue in San Luis Obispo honors their contributions.



Active Railroad Track

-  1870
-  1880
-  1915
-  2013