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Caltrans and CALCTRA Launch New Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program at the California Institution for Men

Sacramento – Caltrans and the California Correctional Training and Rehabilitation Authority (CALCTRA) are partnering with Ironworkers Local Union 416 and 433 to launch a new ironworkers training program at the California Institution for Men in Chino. The Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program will provide incarcerated individuals with job training skills and the future opportunity for a stable career once they return to their communities.

At a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted today, the Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program officially launched and will continue to operate for three years. Caltrans and CALCTRA will provide qualified participants with approximately 700 hours of union-certified ironworking instruction. The program will be offered twice each year, with a cohort size of up to 20 students per session.

“Investing in people is how we build California’s future,” said Caltrans Director Dina El-Tawansy. “With the right training and support, individuals returning to their communities can step into strong, stable careers. This program will help build the skilled workforce needed to keep our transportation system safe and reliable.”

“The launch of the Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program reflects what is possible when strong partnerships come together with a shared purpose,” said CALCTRA Director Suzie Changus. “By working alongside Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Ironworkers Union, we are creating pathways to rewarding careers while helping meet California’s growing demand for skilled construction professionals. Together, we are building stronger communities by investing in people and opportunity.”

“The California Ironworkers Apprenticeship is proud to partner with CALCTRA, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in shaping the next generation of skilled, confident, and career-ready graduates,” said Ironworkers LU 416/LU 433 Apprenticeship Coordinator

Brad Huth. “Together, we look forward to seeing these future graduates turn opportunity into long-term success as they build strong careers and even stronger communities.”

FHWA and the state will fund the \$762,000 program, which will provide participants with industry-recognized certifications that qualify them for registered apprenticeships and long-term careers in the ironworking trade, one of several skilled labor fields that lack enough trained workers in California. By offering credentialed training inside a correctional facility and linking graduates to apprenticeship programs upon reentry, Caltrans and CALCTRA are creating a pathway to stability and generational change -- while helping meet California’s growing infrastructure needs.

In addition to the hands-on training, correctional participants are provided personal protective equipment, a new set of tools and tool belt, job placement assistance after graduation, and one year of paid union dues when reentering the workforce.

“This partnership proves what’s possible when we lead with opportunity,” said David DeLuz, Caltrans Deputy Director for the Office of Civil Rights. “By connecting industry-aligned training to real apprenticeship pathways, we’re not only addressing workforce shortages – we’re helping people regain purpose, stability and economic mobility.”

This program addresses a portion of workforce shortages in California's construction industry. According to [a recent study](#) from the National Center for Construction Education and Research, 83% of California construction companies report difficulty filling craft positions. Expanding pre-apprenticeship programs is a noted strategy for meeting labor demands while creating pathways to good-paying careers.

"Successful partnerships are built on collaboration and a shared commitment to delivering results," said Robert Hernandez, CALCTRA's Deputy Director of Operations. "Through this program, we are connecting workforce development with California's infrastructure needs by preparing individuals for careers that will help build and maintain the transportation systems our communities rely on."

“This program equips participants with the skills, confidence, and support they need to begin careers in the skilled trades while helping build a workforce that reflects the diversity and talent of California's communities,” said Debi Kamakani, CALCTRA's Deputy Director of Workforce Development.

The Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program supports CALCTRA's mission to expand rehabilitative opportunities and reduce recidivism through meaningful job training. It extends economic opportunity to Californians who often lack access to the state’s skilled-trades pipeline.

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