



## Board Report

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**CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE  
APRIL 16, 2025**

**SUBJECT: FISCAL YEAR 2026 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE this report summarizing the FY26 Program Management Annual Program Evaluation (Attachment A).

**ISSUE**

The Annual Program Evaluation (APE) is a priority initiative to provide transparency into the performance of Metro's capital program. A comprehensive review of the risks associated with the costs and schedules of the program is conducted annually. This report summarizes the results of the FY26 APE review performed by Program Management, Program Controls, and Countywide Planning and Development departments, with additional participation from Operations.

**BACKGROUND**

The Annual Program Evaluation initiative began in 2016 to provide consistent yearly evaluation of Metro's capital program. Metro is responsible for delivery of one of the largest transportation infrastructure programs in the country, and the APE provides current information and transparency into the performance of capital projects. The APE is a project management tool summarizing a variety of initiatives to improve cost and schedule certainty, current trends, and provides the Board with the current status of the various project budgets through completion.

The APE aligns with Program Management's mission statement that "together we build World Class transportation to transform the quality of life in our communities." In support of the mission statement, the APE initiative comprehensively evaluates Metro's capital program, including Transit, Highway, and Regional Rail. Planning projects anticipated to transition to design and construction during fiscal year 2026 are also included. .

**DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

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The Program Management Department is responsible for a diverse portfolio of transportation infrastructure projects. The APE report is primarily focused on existing projects estimated at \$5 million or greater, new projects that will carry-over through FY26, and projects which are anticipated to transition from planning to implementation during FY26. The total value of projects in development and implementation increased from \$25.7-\$27.2 billion in FY25 to \$33.7-\$35.9 billion in FY26. In addition, four additional projects are nearing transition from Planning to Implementation phase, which are currently estimated at \$11.8-\$13.9 billion. Attachment A FY26 Program Management APE presentation includes a complete project listing. The list of projects is grouped into the following categories:

- Major transit projects under construction with a life of project (LOP) budget greater than \$1 billion
- Capital projects with a LOP less than \$1 billion
- Alternative delivery projects
- Projects in development/shovel ready
- Projects in closeout
- Capital Projects - Planning to Implementation

With the significant number and size of Program Management projects and the accelerated implementation schedule for delivering Metro's capital program, Metro's capability and capacity to deliver multiple complex projects on-time and within budget creates unprecedented challenges to project delivery. These challenges are further exacerbated by risks in the infrastructure marketplace including workforce constraints, cost escalation, and the fluctuating price of construction materials. As summarized in the attached report, Program Management and Program Control have completed and implemented several strategic initiatives to improve planning, consistency, transparency, risk management, and discipline to project delivery. These strategic initiatives are complementary and performed in conjunction with the Early Intervention Team (EIT) to benefit from this proactive agency-wide engagement at significant stages of project development. Key initiatives implemented in FY24 and FY25, which are consistent with the OIG Construction Best Practice report, include contracting strategy and cost containment, best practices, CEO delegated authority, cost and schedule controls processes and contingency level updates, material initiatives, alternative delivery manual, alternative delivery team training, and differing site conditions, geotechnical and environmental program rollout.

In addition, many initiatives have been successfully established and will be continuously implemented to foster improvement, such as:

- Staff consultant ratio - Program Management has established an aspirational consultant to staff ratio and created a tracking system across all projects; however, reaching the 50/50 goal will be an on-going effort for all current and future PM projects.
- New Recruitment Strategies - Improving candidate selection and employment offer timelines, securing new talent to grow our own future PM's, and salary study
- Deliver Progressive Design Build (PDB) and Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) projects - the alternative delivery process/procedure manuals and training is complete; however, delivering PDB and CMGC projects are progressing and will remain an on-going effort.

- Third Party and Utilities - Master Cooperative Agreements (MCAs) in project corridors, new MCA with City of Los Angeles, Master Utility Cooperative Agreements with utilities in project corridors
- Professional Services Soft Costs - Monitor, control, and reduce professional services costs as a percentage of the construction cost
- EIT - Continue to use the Early Intervention Team framework to ensure proactive agency-wide collaboration, issue resolution and readiness at key stage gates early in the project lifecycle.

### Considerations

## **2025 Construction Market Outlook**

Entering 2025, Metro is poised to achieve significant construction milestones, including groundbreakings for the G Line Bus Rapid Transit Improvements, I-105 Express Lanes, and East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor, as well as ribbon cuttings for the LAX/Metro Transit Center, Foothill Gold Line Extension Phase 2B, and Westside D Line Extension - Section 1. This wave of construction activity coincides with significant local and national volatility. January 2025 witnessed devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County, resulting in the tragic loss of life and widespread property damage, alongside the implementation of sweeping new federal economic policies. These challenges compound existing construction market pressures, including escalating capital costs, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and heightened labor demand since the passage of Measure M in 2016.

To address these dynamic market conditions and their potential impact on Metro's \$33.6 billion capital program, a 2025 Construction Market Outlook Special Report (Attachment B) was prepared. This report provides a focused analysis of near- and long-term market drivers, aimed at informing Metro's fiscal management and ensuring the timely delivery of transportation infrastructure for Los Angeles County. Key findings include:

- *Federal Trade Policy Impacts:* New import taxes on steel, aluminum, and other key construction materials from Mexico, Canada, and China are causing market uncertainty. Retaliatory measures and increased steel and aluminum prices pose potential risks to Metro's pipeline of projects, where Metro does not have agreed-upon pricing.
- *Wildfire Recovery Effects:* The wildfires' recovery efforts are expected to generate regional construction materials inflation in Southern California, particularly affecting lumber prices. Short-term impacts include high pricing and limited availability for trucking services and underground cables/conduits. Furthermore, local jurisdictions and utility agencies, prioritizing recovery, may face delays in supporting Metro projects, potentially causing 6- to 12-month delays in design reviews, construction inspections, and permit approvals. Metro should seek streamlined permitting to mitigate this risk.

In response to price uncertainties stemming from tariffs and the extensive reconstruction demands of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires, the report outlines strategic approaches for Metro to successfully

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navigate the current complex construction market.

### **Alternative Delivery Projects Update**

The Alternative Delivery Process/Procedure (ADP) Manuals for PDB and CM/GC contracts have been completed, with associated training implemented and ongoing. To date, five alternative delivery contracts have been awarded, with one additional contract in process. Among these, two projects-the G-Line Improvements and I-105 Express Lanes Segment 1 projects-have successfully reached their guaranteed maximum price (GMP) milestones, while three newer projects are actively progressing. Another project is currently under industry review. Additionally, a new procedure for project delivery selection has been adopted and is now utilized for all new project selections. Notably, construction activities for both the G-Line and I-105 Express Lanes projects commenced in February 2025.

The procurement process has yielded positive results, with five contracts successfully awarded, demonstrating strong competition and adherence to schedule. Key areas of improvement include streamlining the execution of Early Work Packages and reducing the time required to reach GMP agreements. Lessons learned throughout the process are being incorporated into Version 2 of the Manual, currently under preparation. Positive trends have emerged, including a Project First mentality, strong partnerships, efficient procurement, competitive bidding, cost transparency, and active executive involvement. Looking ahead to FY26, the focus will be on maintaining partnerships and commitments as projects move further into the construction phase, negotiating favorable contract prices that align with budget objectives for key projects, and continuing to roll out these delivery methods to additional projects and programs.

### **Potential FY26 Program Management Risks**

As described in the 2025 Construction Market Outlook, fiscal year risks include the availability of federal funding, impacts of tariffs, and the effects of wildfires on labor and materials. Additionally, the number of project openings, the size of the program moving forward, and growing agency staffing needs pose significant risks. Coordination with third parties, including assessment of betterment requests and the need to streamline permitting processes is also a risk. Collectively, these items could influence project health and budget planning.

### **Cost Benefit Analysis for Metro Capital Projects**

In February, the Metro Board directed the development of a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) framework that may be used to support funding decisions and to inform a more data-driven and transparent decision-making process. A framework for CBA is one of many tools that can be used to support decisions for infrastructure investments. CBAs may be used to assess the viability of a project, evaluate the cost-effectiveness of project investments, identify contributions to economic vitality, strategically position projects for federal and state funding opportunities, and assess reflection of Board priorities and evaluation criteria.

Countywide Planning and Development continues to support the capital program by developing a standardized model and methodology for CBA, including national and other economic data to support Government Relations advocacy programs, state and federal funding programs, stakeholder engagement, and Metro strategic planning. The Cost Benefit Analysis Framework consists of the



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following: (1) Identification of Project benefits, which may be quantitative, qualitative, or both, (2) determination of Project costs, using a standardized estimating methodology that includes soft costs, probabilistic risk, cost escalation and accuracy range based on level of design, and normalized to year of expenditure or construction, (3) evaluation and presentation of costs compared to benefits, tailored to the appropriate audience such as federal grant programs, state funding agencies, and/or local stakeholders and communities.

## **EQUITY PLATFORM**

All of the capital projects have project-specific community engagement activities and equity impacts. The projects have been grouped and assessed under six categories of high-level equity impact, as described below.

### **Major Transit Capital Projects**

These major projects support transit access and connectivity through new construction and expansion across Los Angeles County. While specific project areas vary in demographics, land use, and jurisdiction, these projects, such as Crenshaw LAX and Regional Connector which were recently opened for revenue service, all intended to improve access to key opportunities at essential destinations, such as jobs, health care, school, and neighborhood amenities, via high-quality transit. Other potential anticipated equity benefits include a reduction in single occupancy vehicle use and reliance, improved air quality, and a reduction in household transportation costs.

### **Multi-modal Capital**

These projects are anticipated to expand multi-modal options for travelers through a variety of interventions, including light rail, active transportation infrastructure, and high-occupancy vehicle lane improvements. While project types and geographies vary, the shared impact is anticipated to diversify modes and costs of travel choices. Transit and active transportation infrastructure enhancements such as LAX/Metro Transit Center Station and Gold Line Foothill Extension Phase 2B Project, are anticipated to improve safety for people walking and rolling.

### **Assets Capital**

Capital improvements for Metro asset projects will serve Metro employees as well as the public. These projects will update equipment and other assets, which are required to maintain safe working conditions for Metro employees and minimize project and service delivery disruptions for Metro riders. Specifically, the recently completed Metro Training and Innovation Center is an exciting resource for a new generation of potential Metro workforce members to gain skills and connections for future career opportunities.

### **Infrastructure Capital**

Infrastructure maintenance and improvements, such as the Division 20 Portal Widening Turnback and the completed Metro Blue Line Pedestrian Safety Enhancements at Grade Crossing, contribute to safe and accessible conditions for Metro riders and the general public, including soundwall protection, wayfinding, grade and modal separation, and transit station upgrades.

### **Regional Rail**

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The projects that fall under the Regional Rail capital program will expand transit and other multi-modal choices for travelers in Los Angeles. Anticipated improvements include improved station access, increased rail capacity, and safer right-of-way improvements between different modes.

### Highways

The highway capital projects, such as I-5 North County Enhancement Project and I-105 Express Lanes, will improve safety conditions for travelers and the surrounding project areas of existing highway corridors via soundwall protection, high-occupancy vehicle lane expansion, highway safety design, and some multi-modal infrastructure. These projects are not anticipated to encroach on surrounding communities or further burden neighborhoods adjacent to existing highways.

## **VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME**

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide. These declining VMT trends are due, in part, to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.\* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

The projects in this report have mixed outcomes, but on the whole, most of the projects in this report will likely decrease VMT in Los Angeles County. Within this suite of projects, Metro seeks to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, provide a safe transportation system, and increase accessibility to destinations via transit, cycling, walking, and carpooling. Some of the projects within this status report include items that will ease congestion for cars and trucks, or expand vehicle capacity, resulting in the possibility of increased VMT. However, these projects also provide for carpooling infrastructure and reinvestment of funding towards transit projects. In addition, the projects' multi-modal benefits may contribute to offsetting the possible increase in VMT.

While the agency remains committed to reducing VMT through transit and multimodal investments, some projects may induce or increase personal vehicle travel. However, these individual projects aim to ensure the efficient and safe movement of people and goods. Although the Highway projects and Express lanes projects may not directly contribute to the achievement of the Board-adopted VMT Reduction Targets, the VMT Targets were developed to account for the cumulative effect of a suite of programs and projects within the Metro region, which individually may induce or increase VMT. Additionally, Metro has a voter-approved mandate to deliver multimodal projects that enhance mobility while ensuring the efficient and safe movement of people and goods.

\*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The recommendation supports Strategic Plan Goal #1 - Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. This will be accomplished by planning and delivering multiple capital projects on time and on budget.

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## **NEXT STEPS**

Program Management will request the resources required for project delivery success through the FY26 Budget process for Board approval. Project managers will work to deliver projects safely, on time, and within the Board-approved budgets. Bi-monthly project updates will continue to be provided to the Board throughout the year. Projects identified in this APE requiring LOP adjustments will return to the Board for a request for approval as necessary. In addition, staff will continue to pursue continuous improvement initiatives, implement recommendations from the construction market analysis, and move forward with implementing CBA's for Metro projects.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - FY26 Annual Program Evaluation Presentation

Attachment B - 2025 Construction Market Outlook Special Report

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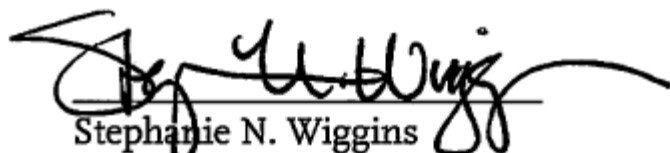
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## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **FY26 Annual Program Evaluation Presentation**

**Document Available Online at:**

**[https://libraryarchives.metro.net/DB\\_Attachments/2025-0174%20Fiscal%20Year%202026%20Program%20Management%20Annual%20Program%20Evaluation.pdf](https://libraryarchives.metro.net/DB_Attachments/2025-0174%20Fiscal%20Year%202026%20Program%20Management%20Annual%20Program%20Evaluation.pdf)**



# 2025 Construction Market Outlook

Special Report: Federal Policies and Los Angeles Wildfires



Metro®

MARCH 2025





**Metro**

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Contractor Bidding</b>	<b>25</b>
Purpose	1	Recent Bid Results Analysis	26
Federal Policies	2	Escalation	27
2025 Wildfire Recovery	3	Contract Terms and Conditions	27
Disclaimers	4		
<b>Employment</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>	<b>29</b>
Federal Policy on Immigration	6	Employment Summary	29
Wildfire Recovery	7	Materials Pricing Summary	29
Employment Data Trends	8	Contractor Bidding Summary	29
		Recommendations	29
<b>Materials</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>31</b>
Federal Policy on Tariffs	15		
Wildfire Recovery	17	<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>A-1</b>
Material Pricing Trends	19		
		<b>Appendix Endnotes</b>	<b>A-4</b>

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

BRT	bus rapid transit
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CA CCI	California Construction Cost Index
CM/GC	Construction Management/General Contractor
DBB	design-bid-build
DINS	damage inspection
ENR CCI	Engineering News-Record Construction Cost Index
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FTE	full-time employee
HVAC	heating/ventilation/air conditioning
LTRP	long-term recovery plan

# Introduction

## Purpose

As Metro enters 2025, the agency is poised to achieve significant construction milestones that include ribbon cuttings for the LAX/Metro Transit Center (Airport Metro Connector), Foothill Gold Line Extension Phase 2B – Pomona, and the Westside D Line (Purple Line) Extension – Section 1. At the same time, construction will commence on key projects such as the G Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Improvements, I-105 ExpressLanes, and East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor.

This wave of construction activity occurs against a backdrop of considerable local and national volatility triggered by a quick succession of dramatic and historical events in January 2025. Major fires in Los Angeles County caused the tragic loss of 29 lives and extensive property damage estimated between \$28 billion and \$53 billion by the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation. This will undoubtedly impact the Southern California construction market. Furthermore, the inauguration of a new presidential administration in mid-January 2025 initiated sweeping federal economic policies that will also shape the market.

These new challenges compound the existing market volatility stemming from escalating capital costs, inflation, supply

chain disruptions, and increased labor demand since the passage of Measure M in 2016. Recognizing the potential impact of these factors on its \$33.6 billion capital program encompassing 36 projects (Figure 1), Metro prepared this 2025 Construction Market Outlook Special Report. This report aims at providing a focused analysis of near- and long-term impacts resulting from these rapidly occurring market drivers to help Metro with effective fiscal management in delivering transportation infrastructure for Los Angeles County:

- > Federal tariff policies and wildfire recovery on construction material costs
- > Federal immigration policies and wildfire recovery on the construction workforce
- > Combined effects of the above on future construction bids

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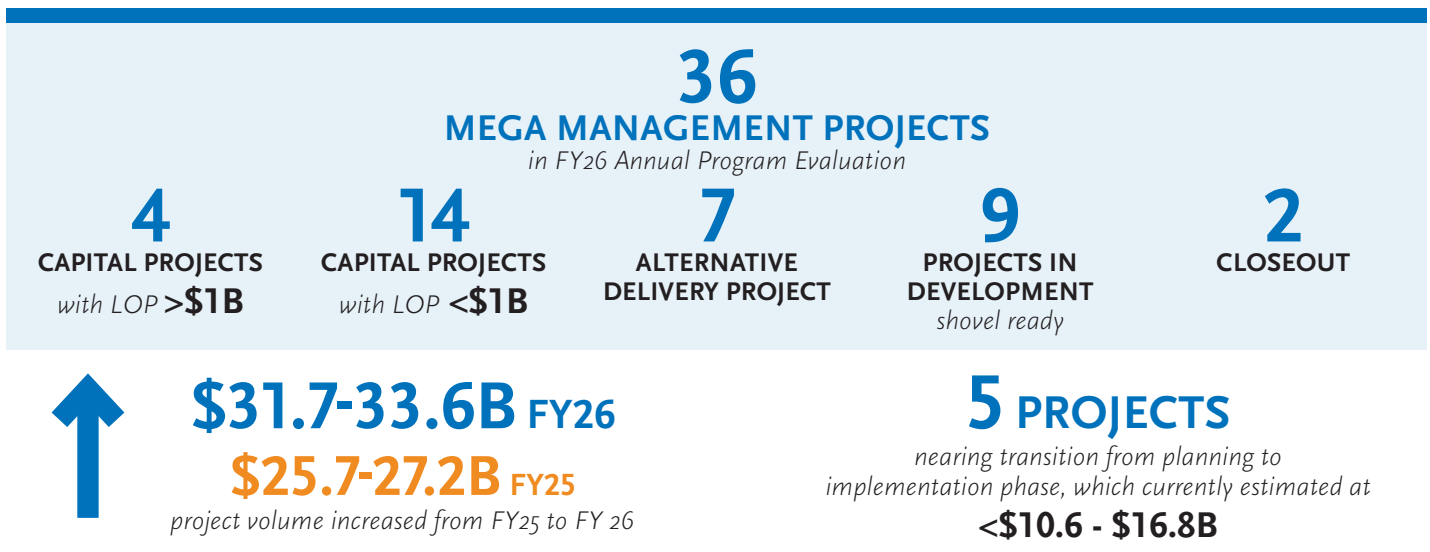
**“In an industry that needs long lead times, uncertainty is a major problem for construction.”**

*Peter Tateishi, CEO, Associated General Contractors of California*

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Figure 1

### FY26 Program Summary



Source: Metro FY 2026 Annual Program Evaluation<sup>1</sup>



## Federal Policies

The new federal administration has initiated a period of economic policy shifts causing significant market uncertainty. Several policy areas, such as tariffs and immigration, are anticipated to substantially impact the construction market.

- > **Tariff policies:** The administration has enacted tariffs on imports from Canada, Mexico, and China, with rates of 25% for Canada and Mexico and 10% for China, all of which are significant US trade partners for construction materials. Furthermore, an additional 25% tariffs have been imposed on steel and aluminum, and the administration is considering further tariffs on lumber.
- While Metro's federally funded projects use domestically produced steel in compliance with the Buy America Act, the tariffs will increase demand for US products from other construction sectors, like residential and commercial construction. These sectors have greater purchasing power in sourcing materials, which will likely result in higher prices for US steel products for future Metro projects.

> **Immigration policies:** The implementation of new immigration policies on border security and enhanced vetting of visa applicants will likely reduce legal immigrant and undocumented immigrant populations. This could cause a decline in California's general workforce population.

- Metro's labor compliance procedures verify the identity and employment authorization of the construction workforce. Other construction sectors more reliant on undocumented workers, such as residential construction, could experience a void in workers.

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*"A tariff...is a tax levied by governments on the value...of imported products."*

*US Department of Commerce,  
International Trade Administration<sup>2</sup>*

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# 2025 Wildfire Recovery

In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced two of the most devastating wildfires in California history. Fueled by extremely dry vegetation and gale-force winds, the wildfires destroyed entire neighborhoods, particularly in Altadena and Pasadena (Eaton Fire) and the Pacific Palisades and Malibu (Palisades Fire). The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) estimates that approximately 16,250 buildings (homes, businesses and community institutions) were burned down in the Eaton and Palisades fires and resulted in 29 deaths.<sup>3,4</sup> Impacts from these fires will be felt across these communities and the rest of Los Angeles County for generations.

## Recovery Timeline Scenarios

The large scale and magnitude of the damage caused by the wildfires will take many years to rebuild. The recovery timeline remains uncertain and depends on several key factors. Delays in federal disaster relief funding or insurance payouts could significantly hinder progress. Furthermore, a surge in demand for construction labor and materials within Los Angeles County may lead to shortages and price inflation, creating additional obstacles to timely reconstruction.

The Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation modeled three potential scenarios, each with different timelines, as shown in Figure 2.

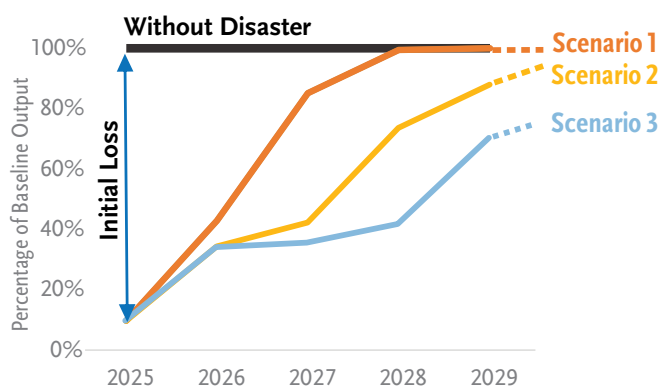
## Economic and Construction Impacts

While it is difficult to forecast the construction spending and activity for recovery efforts stemming from the wildfires, the following situations and impacts to Metro have the potential to occur to varying degrees:

- > Displaced residents forced to leave Los Angeles County for housing or employment reasons will potentially lower local consumer demand and tax revenue. Residents located in the vicinity of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires generate sizeable amounts of economic activity and personal income tax revenue, having median household incomes of \$200,000 and \$143,200, respectively.

Figure 2

Recovery Trajectory of Economic Output under Three Scenarios



Source: LAEDC. 2025. *Impact of 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires and Comparative Study*.<sup>5</sup>

### SCENARIO 1

Assumes a recovery period between 2025 and 2028 based on FEMA's building recovery time and extensive construction activity.

### SCENARIO 2

Assumes a recovery period between 2025 and 2032 that doubles FEMA's building recovery time to reflect potential challenges such as construction labor shortages, financial constraints, and administrative delays.

### SCENARIO 3

Assumes a recovery period between 2025 and 2034 that triples FEMA's building recovery time to reflect substantial delays by logistical and resource challenges. Potential factors include limited disaster funding, lengthy negotiations with insurers, delays in critical infrastructure rebuilding, and regional shortages of construction labor and materials.

## Disclaimers

This analysis was prepared for Metro's Program Controls Department in support of the Fiscal Year 26 Annual Program Evaluation. Metro data, literature, statistical data, and construction industry opinions and feedback were used to prepare this evaluation of the construction market. Based on the data and surveys, trends and forecast conditions were developed for the report. Data appearing in this report were compiled, analyzed and prepared between late February 2025 and mid-March 2025, so may not reflect the latest available data from the above sources. The findings presented are intended for general guidance only; economic forecasting is inherently uncertain, and actual results may differ materially from the time at which the projections were conducted. The forecasts and projections contained in this report are based on various assumptions, methodologies and data sources that may be subject to change.



- Displaced residents from the Eaton and Palisades fires moving out of Los Angeles County would have minimal impact on the construction workforce with 3% of employed residents affected by the Eaton fire working in construction and less than 1% of employed residents affected by the Palisades fire working in construction.
  - Potential reduction of Metro's sales tax revenue, which could create funding constraints on Metro's capital program.
- > The wildfire destruction and recovery, and associated publicity and potential misconceptions about the damage, could deter tourists from visiting Los Angeles County, resulting in decreased tourism revenue for the region.
- This would reduce Metro's sales tax revenue, which could create funding constraints on Metro's capital program.
- > Increased demand for construction materials and workers in Los Angeles County to support reconstruction efforts from the wildfires could result in scarcities and escalating prices.
- Construction materials slightly differ for residential and infrastructure construction, but common commodities like steel, lumber, aluminum, copper, and glass could result in supply scarcities and escalating prices. This could create schedule delays and increase the cost of building Metro projects.
  - Although most construction trades on Metro projects are skilled/specialized (such as tunneling and electrical systems), common trades like carpentry, roofing, plumbing, and heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) will be in high demand.
  - Long-term workforce challenges for specialized transit infrastructure work may be affected if entry-level workers choose more readily available but less-demanding jobs that do not require rigorous certification and training.
  - Reduced availability of temporary housing stock could either deter laborers from outside the region from working in the Los Angeles area or could increase the costs of bringing in contract labor from outside the region.



# Employment

The construction industry's labor force is a critical component of its expansion, having reached a record 8.3 million jobs in February 2025. This surge is primarily attributed to the growth of infrastructure and data center megaprojects, even with a slowdown in commercial and residential construction, likely influenced by the Federal Reserve's high interest rate policy.

While the industry faces an aging workforce (workers aged 55 and over nearly doubled in the past two decades), recent trends suggest a potential influx of new talent. Specifically, vocational community college enrollment saw a 16% increase in 2024, the largest since 2018, with construction trades programs experiencing a notable 23% rise in enrollment. This indicates a growing interest in skilled trades, potentially reducing the impact of retirements by members of the aging construction workforce.



## Federal Policy on Immigration

The implementation of new and potential federal immigration policies, designed to bolster border security and enforce stricter vetting of legal permanent residency and work visa applications, introduces a potential risk to the construction sector's labor supply. Although the full labor market implications are still unfolding, a likely consequence is a slowdown in the available construction workforce.

US Census data underscores this potential risk, indicating that legal immigrants constitute roughly 20% of the national construction workforce, and California's reliance is much higher at 41%, the highest in the nation, as shown in Figure 3.

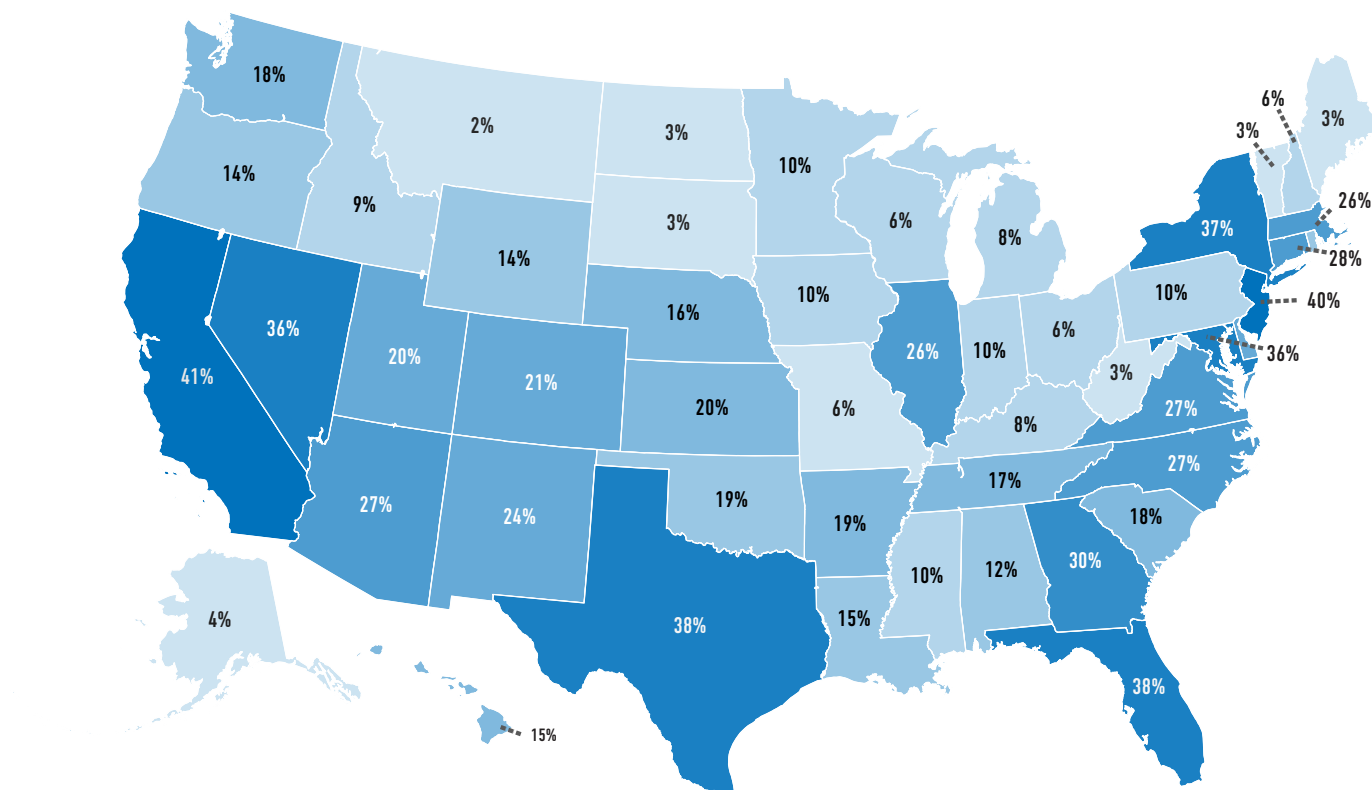
The federal government's review of work visa policies, specifically the H-1B program for specialized fields such as engineering, carries substantial implications for the

construction sector. With construction demand surging, the need for skilled engineers is critical. A potential decrease in H-1B visa approvals could impede the industry's ability to access essential talent, especially in areas like engineering, which is increasingly vital as owners and contractors adopt alternative delivery approaches.

Federal policies on border security and deportation will have a negligible impact on Metro's program because construction projects are primarily staffed by union and use labor compliance procedures to verify the identity and employment authorization of the construction workforce. Other construction sectors more reliant on undocumented workers, like residential construction, could experience a void in workers.

Figure 3

### Immigrant Workers in the Construction Labor Force



Source: US Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey.<sup>6</sup>

## Wildfire Recovery

The extent to which wildfire reconstruction will affect the labor force is yet to be fully determined. Recovery initiatives will create a surge in demand for specific craft labor, such as carpenters, roofing specialists, plumbers, and HVAC technicians. Metro projects need these trades, but they are not as critical as other specialized trades required for complex infrastructure construction and systems installation.

Several local jurisdictions and utility agencies are redirecting a significant number of their staff to focus on recovery and

reconstruction efforts. This reallocation could result in delays for non-wildfire-related projects, specifically in design reviews, construction inspections, and permit approvals. Under typical circumstances, these processes can take a few months. However, recent consultations with these entities indicate potential delays ranging from 6 to 12 months. These extended timelines could substantially affect Metro projects, potentially leading to schedule disruptions and increased project costs.

### Case Study – Maui Wildfires

The aftermath of the Eaton Fire and Palisades Fire on the communities in Los Angeles County mirrors the social and economic impacts of a series of wildfires on the island of Maui in the State of Hawai'i in 2023, notably the Lahaina Fire. On August 8, 2023, devastating wind-driven wildfires burned through Lahaina, Kula, Olinda, and Pūlehu. Lahaina was severely impacted by wildfires that caused at least 102 deaths, destroyed more than 2,200 structures, and resulted in approximately \$5.5 billion in damages. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published a long-term recovery plan (LTRP) to map the short-, medium- and long-term initiatives to support revitalization of the Lahaina community. These initiatives were identified by county, state and federal partners with input from community members and the general public.

The LTRP included a review of economic conditions in Lahaina before the wildfires and the impacts of the wildfires to illustrate the current challenges to the community. The primary impacts identified by the analysis included the property and excise tax revenues, housing affordability and availability and the impacts to businesses. Having a primarily tourism-based economy, Lahaina businesses are significantly affected by the decline in tourism spending, the displacement of their workforce and the damage of their commercial properties. The Lahaina Fire destroyed 1,898 residential structures representing 45% of the housing supply in the city, presenting the challenge of housing the displaced population while exacerbating the issue of housing affordability on Maui. In the decade preceding the Lahaina Fire, the increase in the median cost of housing was about double the growth in median household income, illustrating the existing cost pressures on housing affordability. The displacement of the resident working population due to affected employment centers and housing affordability resulted in reduced availability of education, healthcare and social assistance services for the remaining residents. Additionally, nearly four in five working residents in Lahaina were employed outside of the city, illustrating the ripple effect of workforce impacts on the economies of surrounding communities.

The scope of recovery efforts is expected to significantly impact construction employment on Maui based on the projected labor demand and the current labor availability. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2023, the average construction industry employment in Maui and Kalawao County was 4,652; in September 2024, the construction industry employment was 4,814. The scope of recovery efforts would require doubling the construction labor force on the island of Maui, resulting in up to 20% inflation of labor wages and additional costs for housing off-island workers. Costs for building materials are expected to experience similar inflation due to the remote location and small size of Maui's main port in Kahului. In comparison, during recovery in Puerto Rico following the 2017 hurricanes, FEMA ended up paying 20% to 40% more than initially anticipated for reconstruction; the port of San Juan in Puerto Rico includes 15 piers and is located much closer to the mainland than Maui's port Kahului with only 3 piers. These factors demonstrate the potential impacts on local construction industry employment and cost inflation for construction labor and materials during the recovery efforts.



# Employment Data Trends

## Number of Jobs

In 2025, the US labor market is showing signs of softening, as indicated by the national unemployment rate's slight increase from 3.8% to 4.1% year-over-year. While the construction sector maintains a record high of 8.3 million jobs nationwide, the rate of employment growth is decelerating. Furthermore, California and Southern California are observing a distinct contraction in construction employment. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of construction employment numbers for the past two years, allowing for a comparative analysis of national, state and regional trends.

Figures 4 and 5 visually represent construction industry employment across the United States. California stands out with the highest number of construction jobs, accounting for 11% of the national total. Notably, California's construction workforce exceeds the combined total of its neighboring states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. However, California recorded the most significant year-over-year reduction in construction employment, with a loss exceeding 12,000 jobs. Furthermore, Oregon and Arizona also experienced declines in construction employment.

Table 1  
Construction Employment Data for the Past Two Years by Geography

GEOGRAPHY	2023	2024
US Construction Employment	7,947,000	8,136,000
US Annual % Change	3.7%	2.4%
California Construction Employment	905,400	933,700
California Annual % Change	1.8%	3.1%
Southern California* Construction Employment	385,200	396,000
Southern California* Annual % Change	1.4%	2.8%

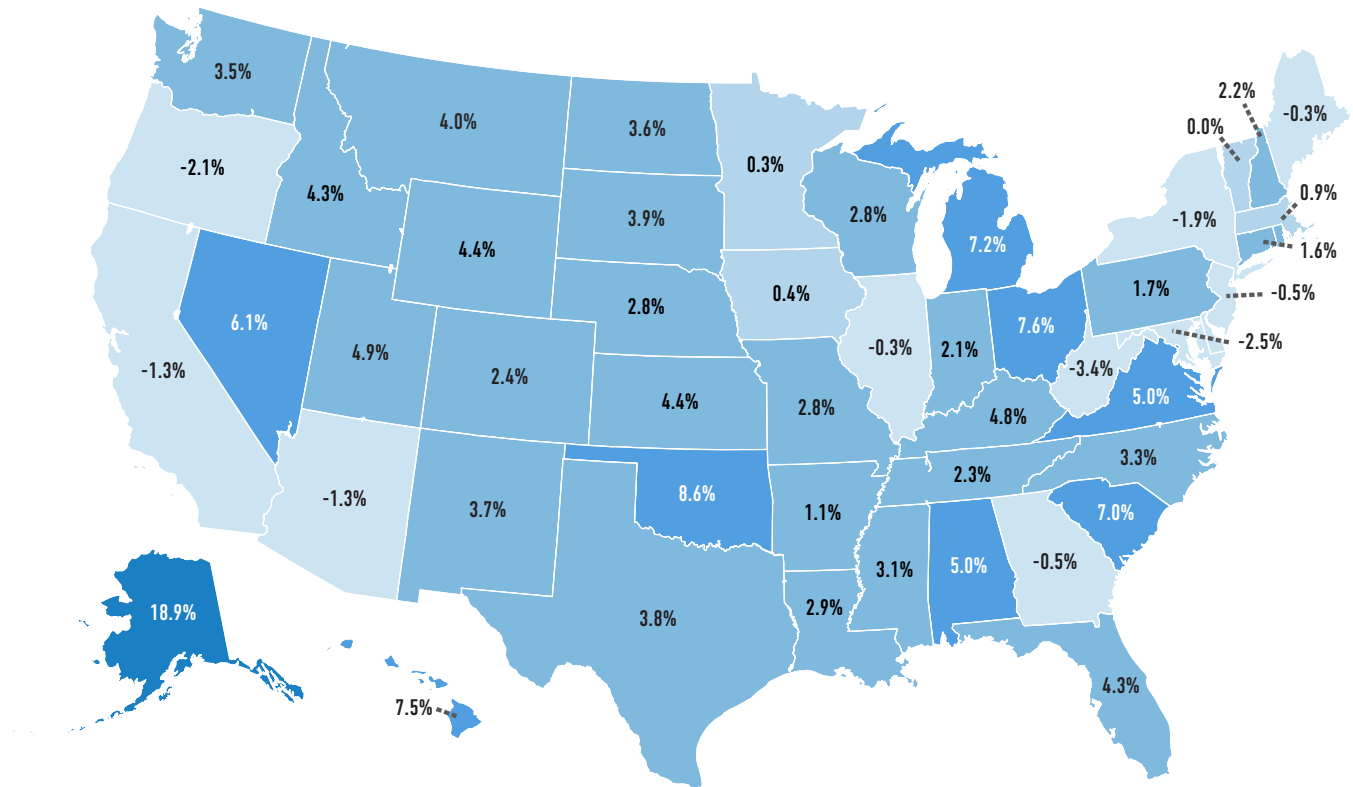
*\*Includes the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura.*  
*Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Industries at a Glance. Construction: NAICS 23.<sup>7</sup>*



Figure 4

## Construction Employment 12-Month Percentage Change

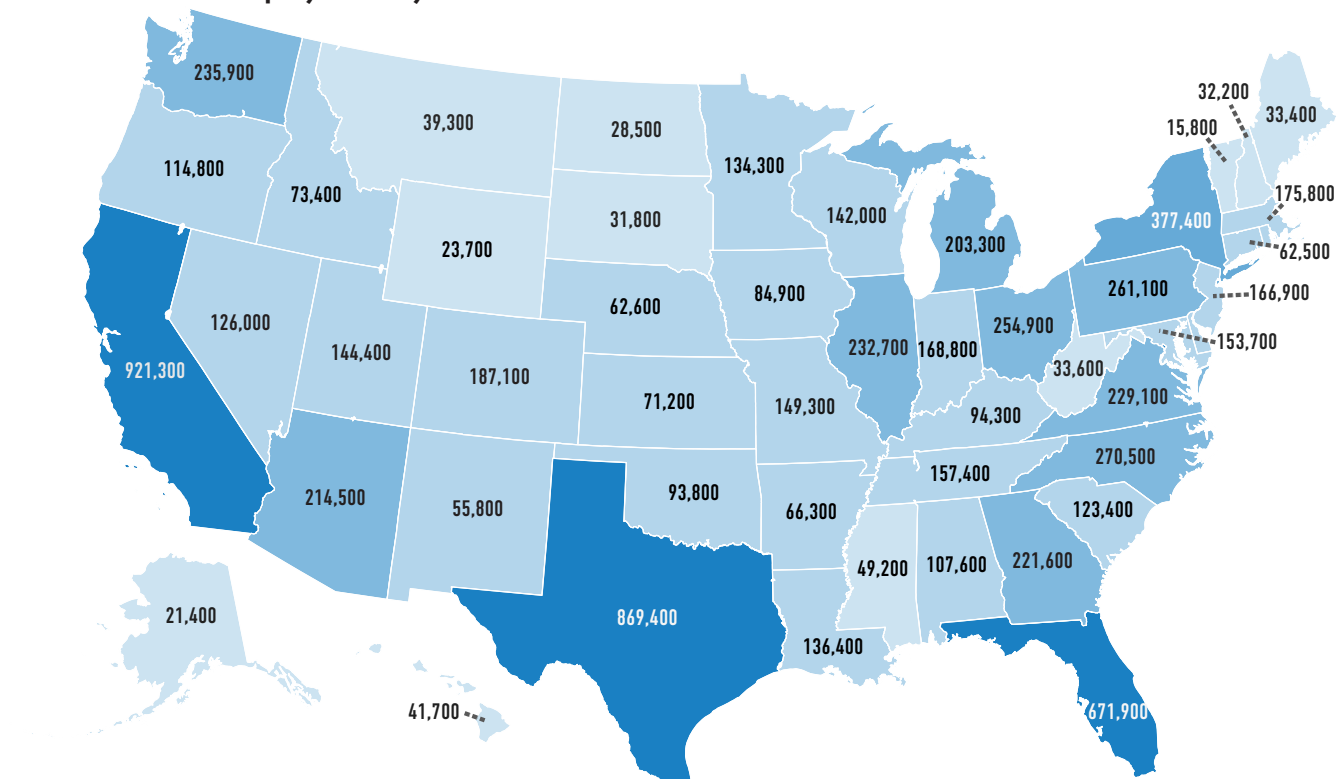
Construction employment is increasing in most states (38 states increased, 10 states decreased and 2 states unchanged)



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Industries at a Glance. Construction: NAICS 23.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5

## Total Construction Employment by State



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Industries at a Glance. Construction: NAICS 23.<sup>9</sup>



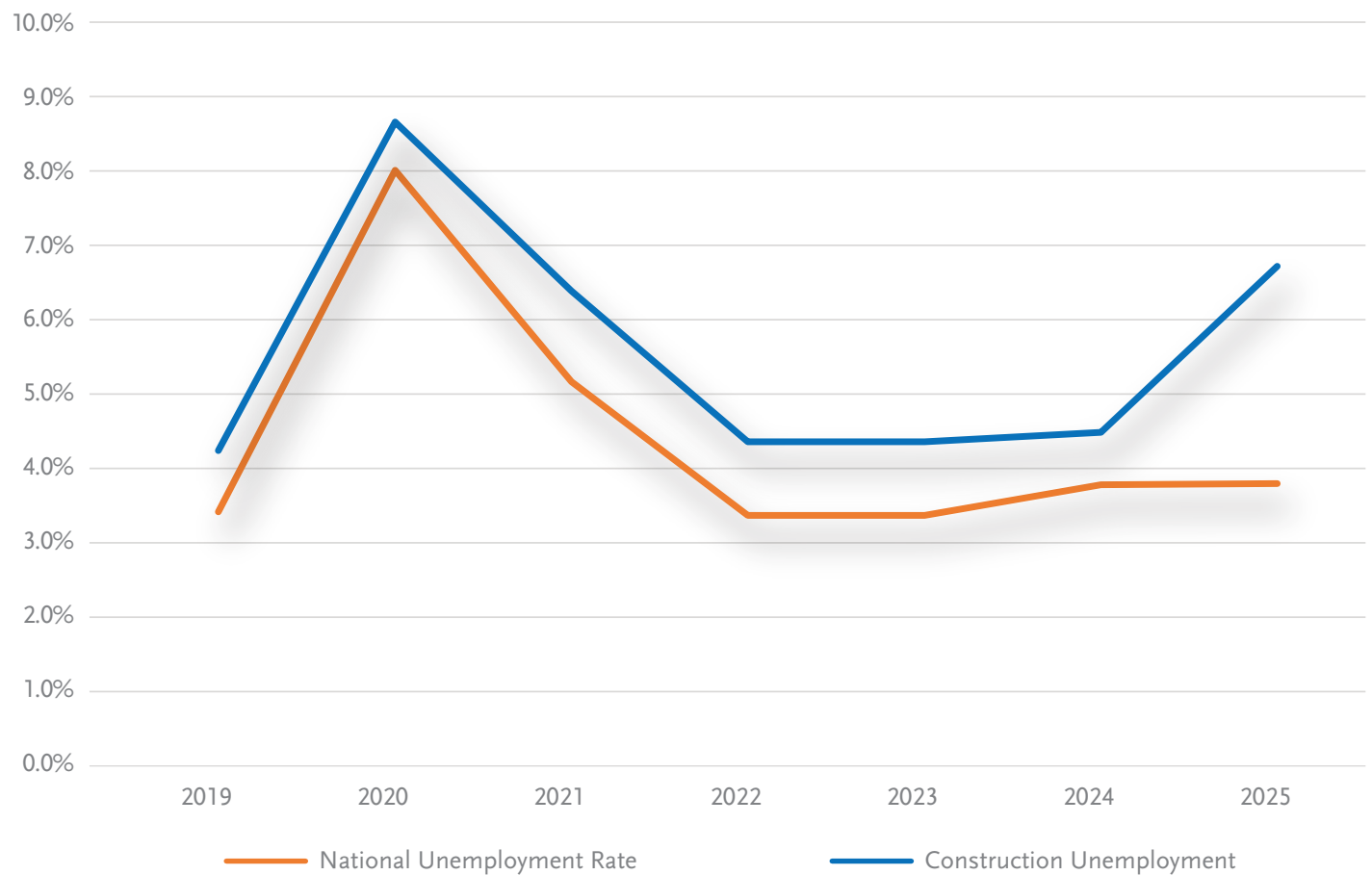


# Unemployment Rate

Figure 6 illustrates recent unemployment rate trends for the national economy and the construction market. The national unemployment rate, which had remained consistently within the 3% to 4% range, suggesting a robust economy, has recently shown a gradual increase above 4%, signaling a potential market softening. Historically, the construction industry's unemployment rate has generally been observed to be about one percentage point higher than the national average. The current spike in construction unemployment is likely influenced by seasonal fluctuations and the impact of severe winter weather conditions across the country.



Figure 6  
Unemployment Rate



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Industries at a Glance. Construction: NAICS 23.<sup>10</sup>

## Openings versus Hirings

Figure 7 demonstrates a notable decrease in construction job openings since their 2023 peak, with current figures approaching half of the prior year's levels. In contrast, construction hiring has maintained a steady pace and surpassed job openings in 2024. Although hiring patterns are consistent with pre-COVID norms, job openings continue to trend above historical averages. This divergence suggests a recent softening in the labor market, while the broader historical perspective indicates a persistently tight labor environment.

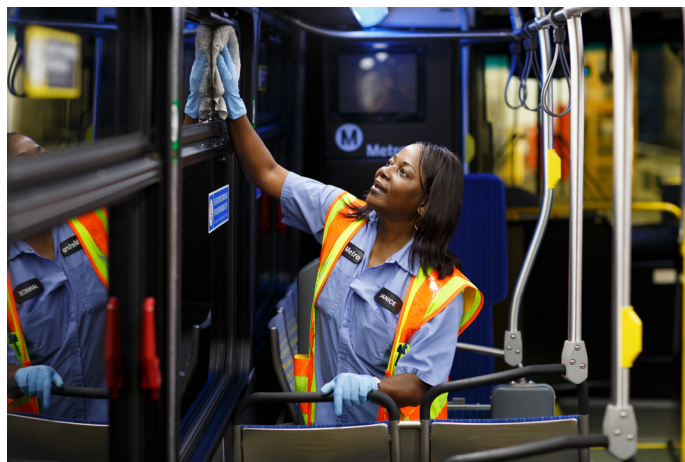
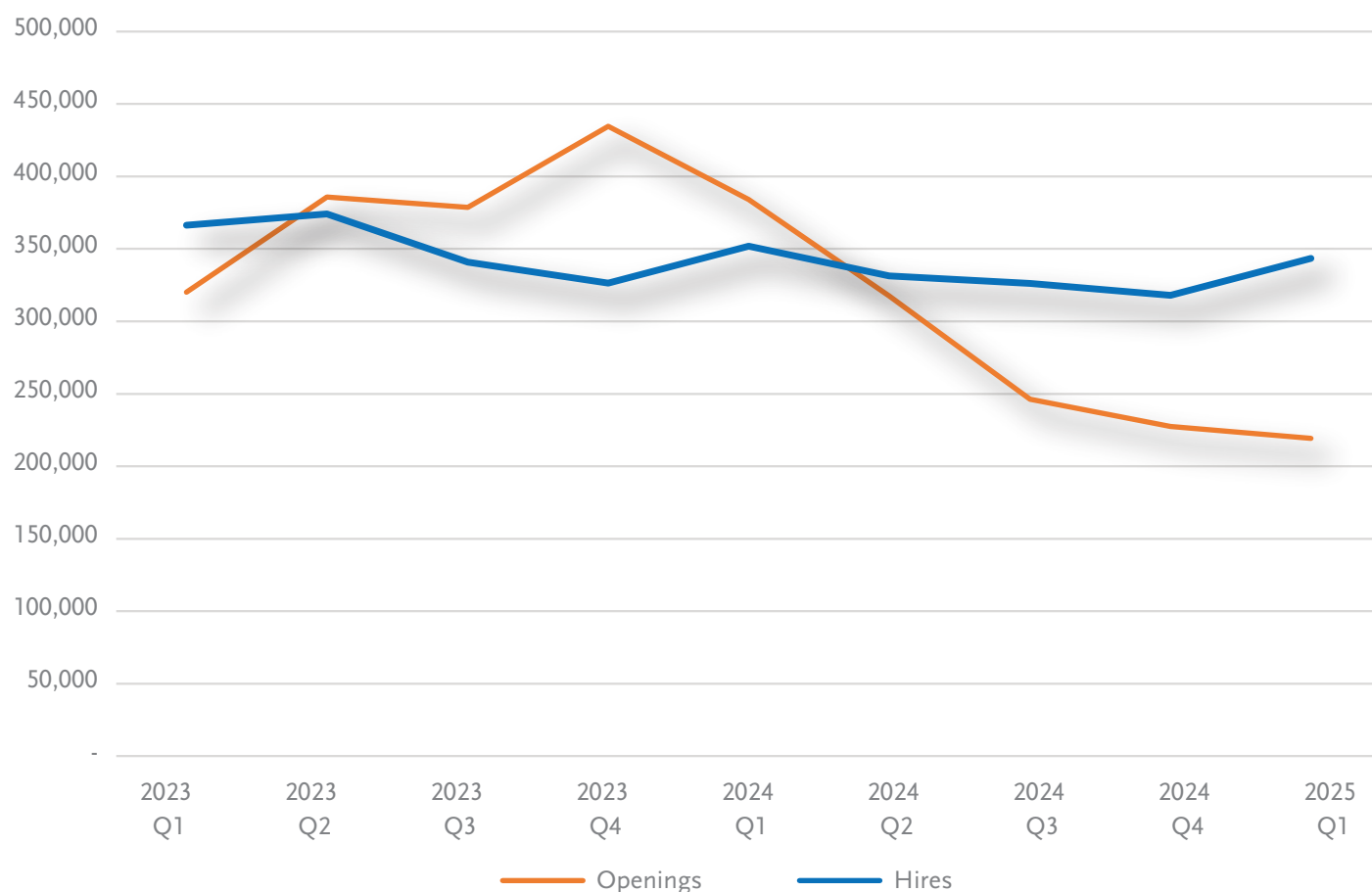


Figure 7

### Construction Job Openings versus Hiring



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. *Industries at a Glance. Construction: NAICS 23*.<sup>11</sup>



## Wages

Contractors are responding to ongoing labor shortages and the sustained impact of high inflation by offering significant wage increases, reflected in both union agreements and rising open-shop compensation. Table 2 details average hourly wages across various construction sectors, including all construction workers, heavy civil construction, and specialty trade contractors provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Notably, heavy civil construction, the sector most relevant to Metro, is experiencing the most pronounced wage growth.

Data from the Construction Labor Research Council indicates that in 2024, union trades such as operating engineers, pipefitters/plumbers, laborers, sheet metal workers, roofers, electricians, and insulators negotiated agreements with first-year wage increases at or exceeding 5%.<sup>12</sup> This current wave of wage increases is largely a lagged response to the 2022 inflation surge. Given that many union contracts, signed in 2021, predate the inflation spike, contractors are boosting wages through a higher percentage first-year increase to ease inflation concerns, followed by slightly lower-percentage increases in the remaining years.

Table 2

National Average Hourly Earnings for Construction Workers over the Past Three Years

NATIONAL AVERAGE HOURLY EARNINGS BY CONSTRUCTION SECTOR AND YEAR	2023	2024	2025
Construction	\$35.63	\$37.53	\$39.05
Annual % Change	5.3%	4.6%	4.0%
Heavy Civil Construction	\$36.44	\$39.36	\$40.94
Annual % Change	5.3%	8.0%	4.0%
Specialty Trade Contractor	\$34.75	\$36.19	\$37.65
Annual % Change	5.5%	4.1%	4.0%

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Table B-3. Average hourly and weekly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted.<sup>13</sup>



## Employment Forecast in Southern California

Construction employment demand based on public agency and private sector spending in Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange and San Bernardino Counties is updated through 2027 to illustrate current market conditions in terms of full-time employees (FTE). This is shown as “Projected FTE Need with Wildfire Recovery” in Figure 8. This latest data differs from the 2023 Construction Market Analysis due to several mega projects being delayed (like Brightline), several projects descope or cancelled (like the LA Convention Center) and tempered residential and commercial construction activity attributed primarily to inflationary pressures and elevated interest rates.

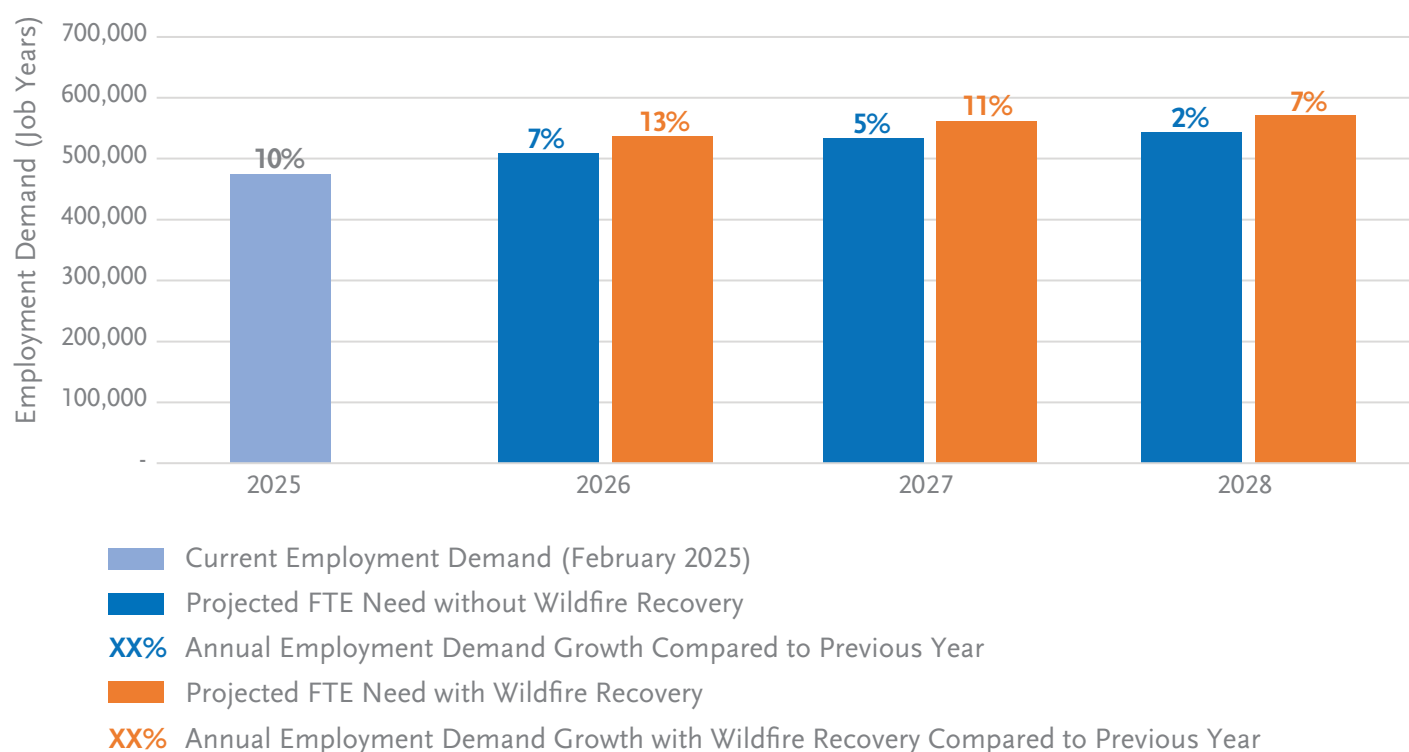
Labor demand related to recovery and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires is considered in the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation’s wildfire recovery analysis<sup>14</sup> using the three scenarios presented previously in Figure 2. Based on Scenario 1, the fastest recovery scenario, the analysis evaluated the job-years of construction labor required to rebuild the areas to their previous condition. The analysis evaluated the characteristics of the structures

either destroyed or requiring major repair based on the latest CAL FIRE Damage Inspection (DINS) data. These structures included single-family homes, multifamily residential buildings, non-residential buildings, and infrastructure. Based on the building information, the total labor-hours required to rebuild or restore the structures were calculated for the three recovery scenarios. Considering the impact of the recovery and rebuilding efforts on the regional employment market in the aftermath of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires, the difference in the market’s labor demand and available employment would increase by up to approximately 5% to 6% through 2028 (Figure 8).

Based on this analysis, the projected employment demand without wildfire recovery is forecasted to increase by 10% in 2025, 7% in 2026, 5% in 2027, and 2% in 2028 as shown in blue on Figure 8. Assuming the fastest wildfire recovery scenario, which has the greatest impact on employment demand, the estimated potential employment demand jumps to 13% in 2026, 11% in 2027 and 7% in 2028, as shown in orange in Figure 8.

Figure 8

### Labor Demand Projection and Annual Growth Percentages



# Materials

Despite the stabilization of construction material prices in 2024 following record highs over the previous several years, the outlook for 2025 suggests potential uncertainty and volatility. Several factors are poised to influence national construction pricing, including federal import tariffs and the moderating effect of slowing interest rates on construction expenditure. At the regional level, specifically within Southern California, the reconstruction efforts in Pacific Palisades and Altadena are expected to drive increased demand for construction materials and associated goods and services throughout Los Angeles County.

## Federal Policy on Tariffs

The federal government has imposed new import taxes on goods coming from America's three biggest trading partners, Mexico, Canada and China. Consequently, back-and-forth tariff threats and responding retaliation among these nations is causing uncertainty in the markets. The uncertainty has roiled financial markets, lowered consumer confidence, and caused businesses to delay hiring and investment. Figure 9 provides a timeline of the tariff actions in 2025 as of the date of this document. The new taxes on construction materials pose a risk to Metro's pipeline of projects, where Metro does not have agreed-upon pricing.

Figure 10 provides a comprehensive overview of the global steel market, focusing on production, trade and consumption patterns. Utilizing data from the Department of Commerce International Trade Administration and the World Steel Association, the exhibit highlights the US as the fourth-largest steel producer, accounting for 4% of global production, and the third-largest consumer, representing 6% of global consumption. China is the largest producer and user of steel in the world, contributing 54% to global production and 51% to global consumption.

The US is the world's largest steel importer, and Canada and Mexico supply 40% of US imports. Even as the world's largest steel importer, the US has limited steel trade engagement with China, with only 2% of imports and less than 1% of exports.

This data demonstrates US reliance on imported steel. Consequently, steel tariffs are expected to drive price increases, elevating construction costs in the future. Metro can anticipate higher contractor bids on future projects that reflect risk aversion, and significant escalation in cost estimates for projects in design, potentially impacting project viability.

Figure 9

### Tariff Timeline



Source: The Associated General Contractors of America, Inc. (AGC). 2025. "Tariff Resource Center for Contractors."<sup>15</sup>



Figure 10

## Deep Dive Into Steel

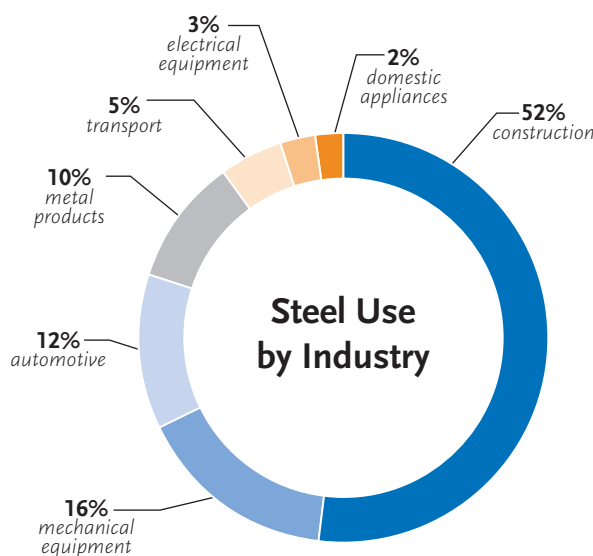
STEEL PRODUCTION (2023)				STEEL CONSUMPTION (2023)			
	Global Rank	% of Market	Millions Tons Produced		Global Rank	% of Market	Millions Tons Consumed
UNITED STATES	#4	4%	81	UNITED STATES	#3	6%	98
MEXICO	#15	1%	16	MEXICO	#8	2%	29
CANADA	#16	1%	12	CANADA	#15	1%	13
CHINA	#1	54%	1,019	CHINA	#1	51%	897
THE REST OF THE WORLD	-	40%	764	THE REST OF THE WORLD	-	41%	1,440

STEEL IMPORT (2023)				STEEL EXPORT (2023)			
	Global Rank	% of Market	Millions Tons Imported		Global Rank	% of Market	Millions Tons Exported
UNITED STATES	#17	2%	9	UNITED STATES	#1	6%	27
MEXICO	N/A	<1%	3	MEXICO	#6	4%	18
CANADA	N/A	1%	7	CANADA	#18	2%	9
CHINA	#1	22%	94	CHINA	#14	3%	11
THE REST OF THE WORLD	-	74%	322	THE REST OF THE WORLD	-	85%	371

## STEEL USE ON METRO PROJECTS

- > Rail Tracks
- > Stations
- > Tunnels
- > Elevators
- > Train/Bus Vehicles
- > Highway/Roadway
- > Bridges
- > Traffic/Light Poles
- > Buildings/Facilities



## KEY FINDINGS

- > The United States is the world's largest steel importer with nearly 40% coming from Mexico and Canada.
- > The volume of steel imports to the United States in 2023 was approximately 8% larger than that of the world's second-largest importer (Germany).
- > 90% of the United States' steel exports go to Canada and Mexico.
- > The United States exports 10% of what it produces, while it imports 33% of what it uses.

Source: World Steel Association. 2024. World Steel in Figures.<sup>16</sup>

## Wildfire Recovery

The extensive damage from the Palisades and Eaton wildfires will require a multi-year reconstruction period. Table 3 identifies previous wildfire recovery efforts and highlights lengthy reconstruction periods. However, the urban and densely populated locations of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires—with an estimated 16,250 buildings destroyed—differentiates them from past events, potentially leading to a different recovery trajectory. Additionally, factors like migration patterns, which influence labor supply and inflationary pressures, make direct comparisons and economic forecasting challenging.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the region's recovery timeline, the scale of rebuilding will likely generate high demand for construction materials resulting in the potential for increased prices and reduced supply. Given that residential and commercial construction, which are highly dependent on lumber, will constitute the majority of reconstruction, lumber costs are expected to rise. Table 4 identifies specific construction services and materials anticipated to rise in price in response to wildfire recovery and reconstruction demands.





Table 3

**Housing Recovery Progress after Major Wildfires**

DISASTER/ LOCATION	ESTIMATED DAMAGE AND STRUCTURES DESTROYED	MONTHS FOR DEBRIS CLEANUP	MONTHS SINCE DISASTER	PERCENT OF DAMAGED HOMES RECEIVED BUILDING PERMIT	PERCENT OF DAMAGED HOMES NOW RE-OCCUPIED
Carr Fire, Shasta County, CA	\$1.7 billion 1,605 structures destroyed	9 months	79 months	40%	36%
Camp Fire, Paradise, CA	\$16.7 billion 18,804 structures destroyed	12 months	77 months	29%	23%
Marshall Fire, Boulder County, CO	\$2+ billion 1,084 structures destroyed	Ongoing (97% complete)	37 months	75%	63%
Maui Wildfires, Lahaina, HI	\$5.5 billion 2,207 structures destroyed	Ongoing (82% complete)	18 months	14%	0%

Source: Rumbach, Andrew, Sara McTarnaghan, Kameron Lloyd, and Aleszu Bajak. 2025. "When Will Los Angeles Rebuild? Comparing Housing Recovery Timelines after Four Recent Wildfires." Urban Institute.<sup>17</sup>

Table 4

**Anticipated Price Increases for Materials and Services in the Near and Long Term Due to Wildfire Recovery and Reconstruction Demand**

NEAR TERM		LONG TERM	
MATERIALS/ SERVICE	REASON	MATERIALS/ SERVICE	REASON
Trucking	Logistics of transporting debris from fire-destroyed structures to landfills will require a huge mobilization of trucking.	Residential housing materials (lumber, concrete, steel, and masonry)	Once debris is cleared and infrastructure rebuilt, materials to support residential construction in fire-impacted communities will be in high demand.
Underground cables and conduits	Utility agencies are moving power lines underground to help bring back power to fire-impacted communities and reduce the risk of future wildfires.	Residential housing services (carpentry, roofing, drywall installers, painters, plumbing, HVAC, electricians)	Construction services to support residential building in fire-impacted communities will be in high demand.
Traffic poles and street lights	Replacement of fire-destroyed street infrastructure to restore affected communities will be in high demand.	Storage Spaces/ Real Estate	Once materials become available and shipped, there will be a higher demand on storage space and real estate for staging required due to the significant amount of inventory needed for infrastructure and homes.

## Material Pricing Trends

The stability of the construction material pricing in 2024 faces significant threats that could disrupt operations and impact supply chains in 2025. The market is currently adjusting to the newly implemented 25% tariff on steel and aluminum, but uncertainty remains around the possible implementation of tariffs on Mexico and Canada, additional future tariffs, and their potential duration, effects, and retaliatory response.

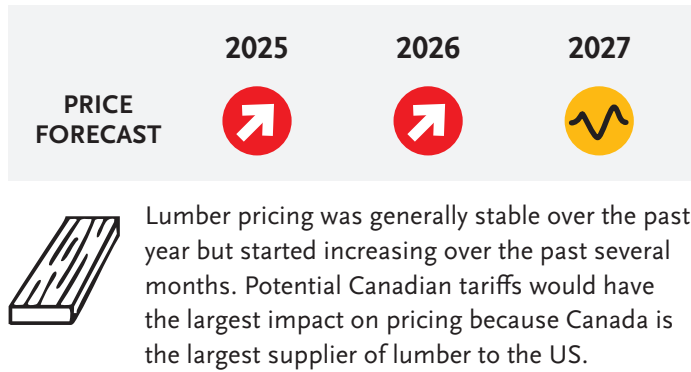
While it's too early in the recovery process to predict the construction market impacts from the wildfires, it is likely that the effects of wildfire recovery will create regional inflation for the construction market in Southern California, with lumber being especially impacted.

Figures 11 through 24 provide snapshots of pricing trends from the last two years and a forecast of percentage changes up to 2027 for key construction materials. Additional insight is provided on key materials likely to be most affected by the tariffs and other market conditions. Additional pricing trends for other materials and services are provided in [Appendix A](#).

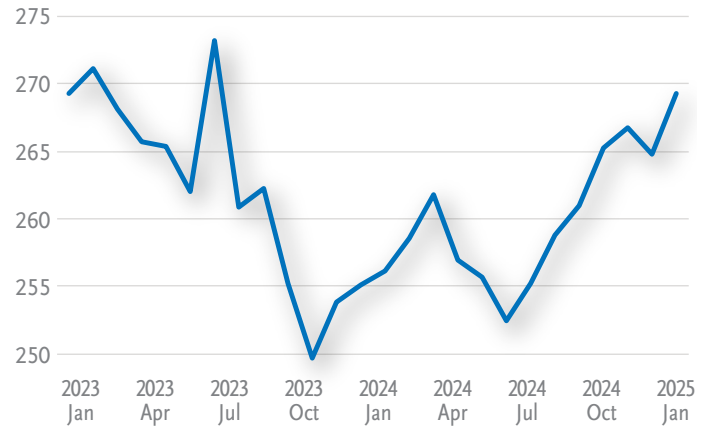


Figure 11

## Lumber and Plywood



2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

**5%**percent change  
in last 12 months**6%**percent change  
in last 6 months**2%**percent change  
in last month

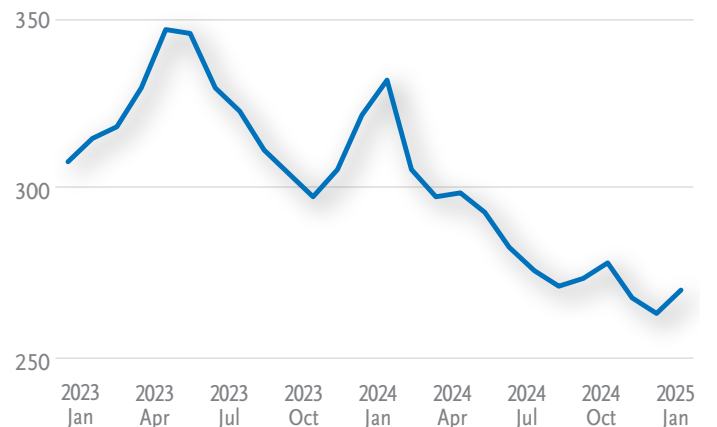
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Special Indexes: Lumber and Plywood (WPUS1004011). February.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 12

## Steel



2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

**-19%**percent change  
in last 12 months**-2%**percent change  
in last 6 months**3%**percent change  
in last month

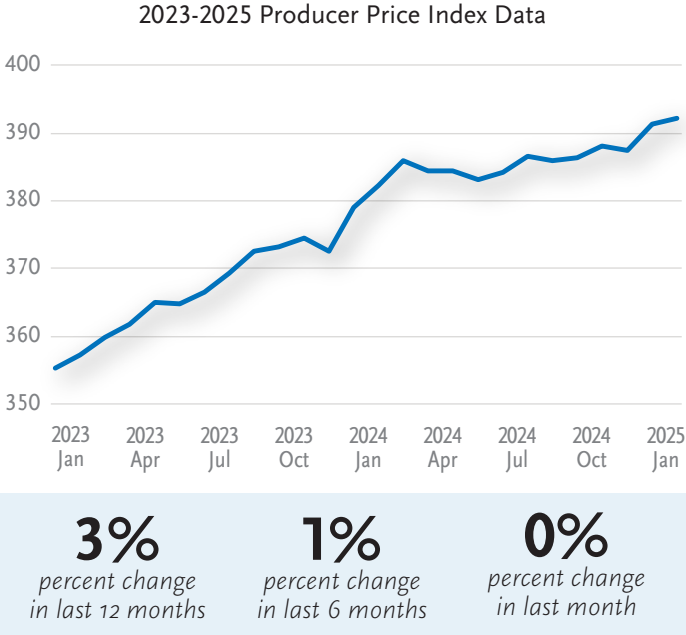
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Steel Mill Products (WPU1017). February.<sup>19</sup>

## Key Status:



Figure 13

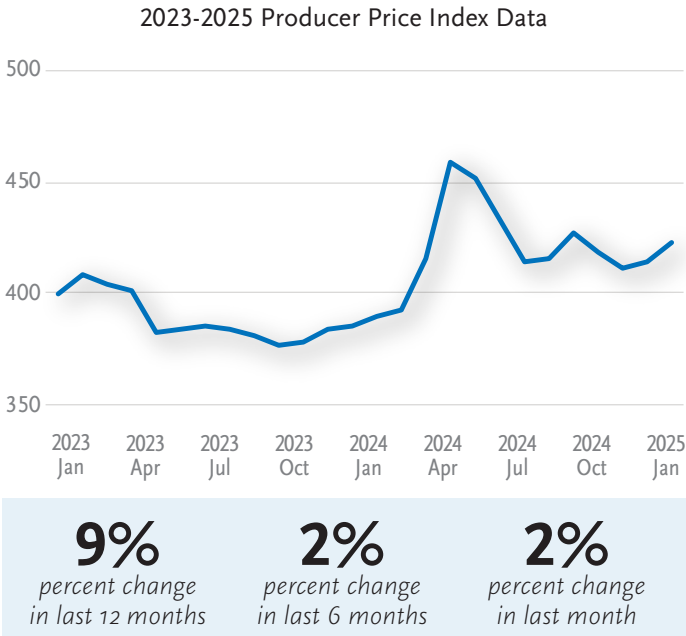
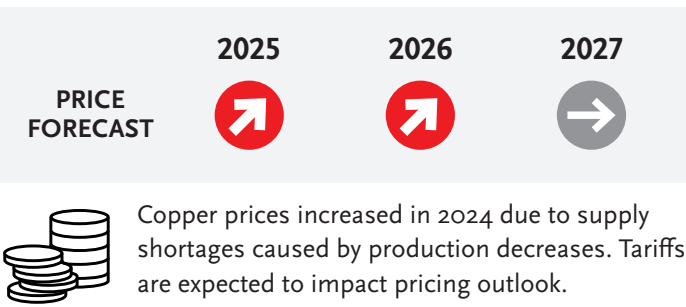
Concrete



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Nonmetallic Mineral Products: Concrete Products (WPU133). February.<sup>20</sup>

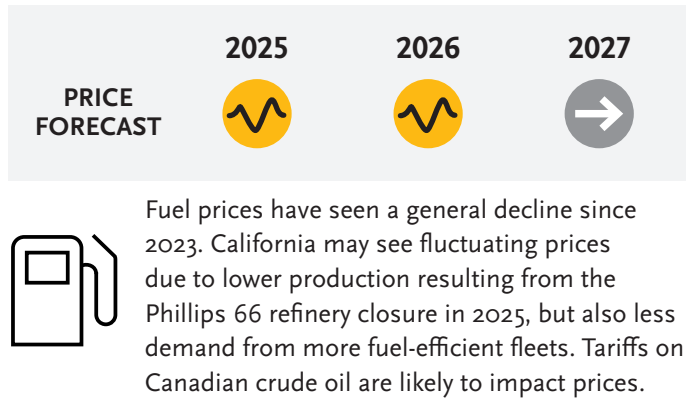
Figure 14

Copper

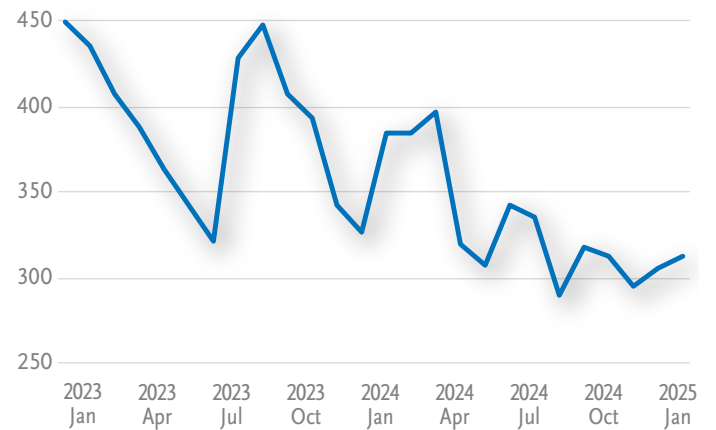


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Copper Wire and Cable (WPU10260314). February.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 15

**Fuel**

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

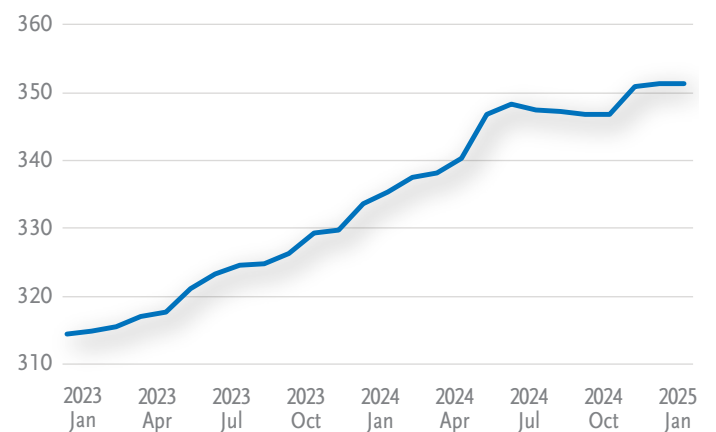
**-18%**percent change  
in last 12 months**-7%**percent change  
in last 6 months**2%**percent change  
in last month

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Fuels and Related Products and Power: No. 2 Diesel Fuel (WPU057303). February.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 16

**Switchgear**

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

**5%**percent change  
in last 12 months**1%**percent change  
in last 6 months**0%**percent change  
in last month

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Machinery and Equipment: Switchgear, Switchboard, Industrial Controls Equipment (WPU1175). February.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 17

## Stainless Steel

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
	↗	↗	→
<b>-5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	
percent change in last 12 months	percent change in last 6 months	percent change in last month	

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



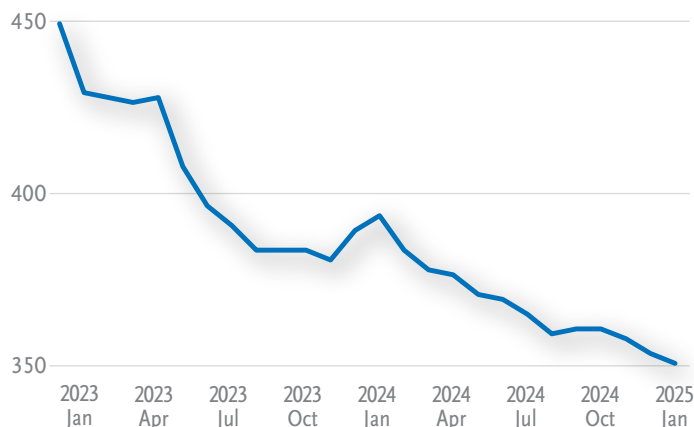
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Steel Pipe and Tube, Stainless Steel (WPU10170674). February.<sup>24</sup>

Figure 18

## Steel Pipe

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
	↗	↗	→
<b>-11%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	
percent change in last 12 months	percent change in last 6 months	percent change in last month	

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



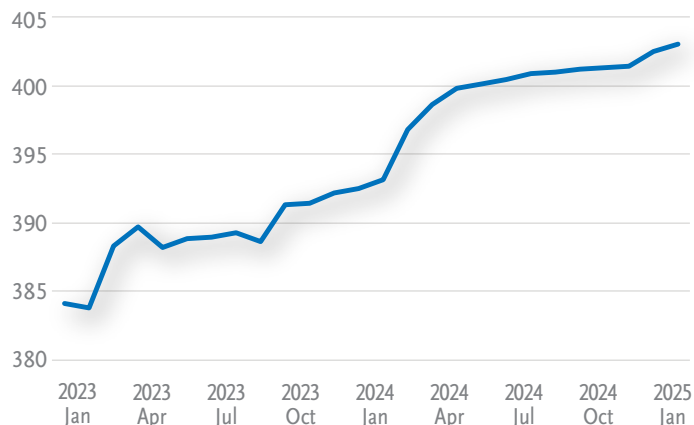
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Steel Pipe and Tube (WPU101706). February.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 19

## Heating

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
	↗	→	→
<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
percent change in last 12 months	percent change in last 6 months	percent change in last month	

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



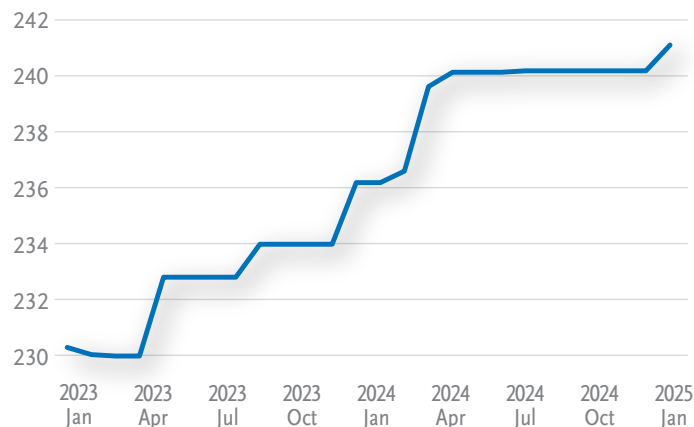
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Heating Equipment (WPU106). February.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 20

## Industrial Fans

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
	↗	→	→
<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
percent change in last 12 months	percent change in last 6 months	percent change in last month	

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data






Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Machinery and Equipment: Industrial and Commercial Fans and Blowers (WPU11470145). February.<sup>27</sup>

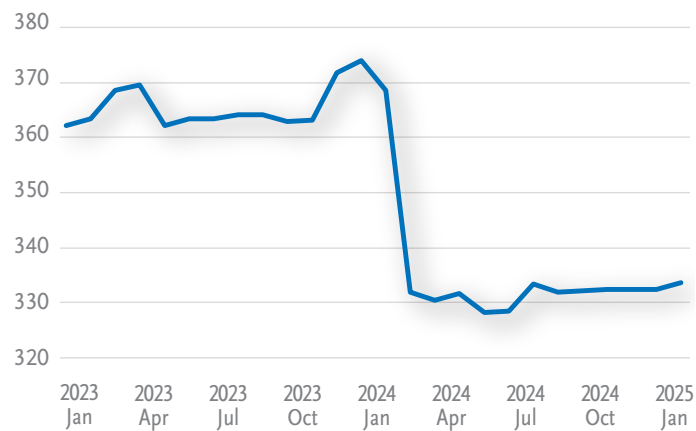


Figure 21

**Fabricated Structural Metal**

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
			
	<b>-9%</b> percent change in last 12 months	<b>0%</b> percent change in last 6 months	<b>0%</b> percent change in last month




2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



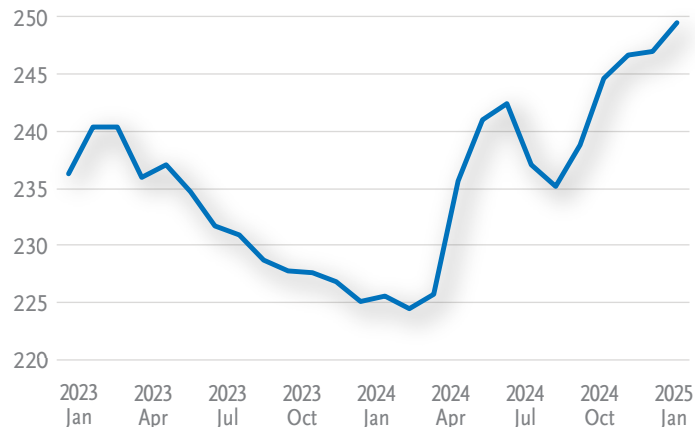
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Metals and Metal Products: Fabricated Structural Metal (WPU107405). February.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 22

**Aluminum**

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
			
	<b>11%</b> percent change in last 12 months	<b>5%</b> percent change in last 6 months	<b>1%</b> percent change in last month




2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



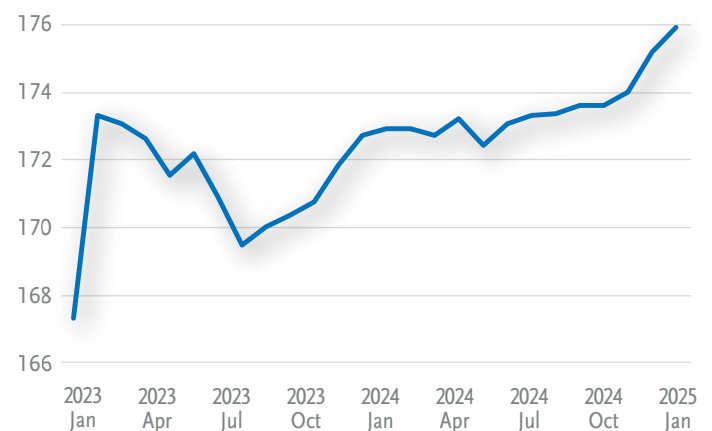
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Aluminum Sheet, Plate, and Foil Manufacturing (WPU 331315331315.) February.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 23

**Glass**

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
			
	<b>2%</b> percent change in last 12 months	<b>1%</b> percent change in last 6 months	<b>0%</b> percent change in last month




2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



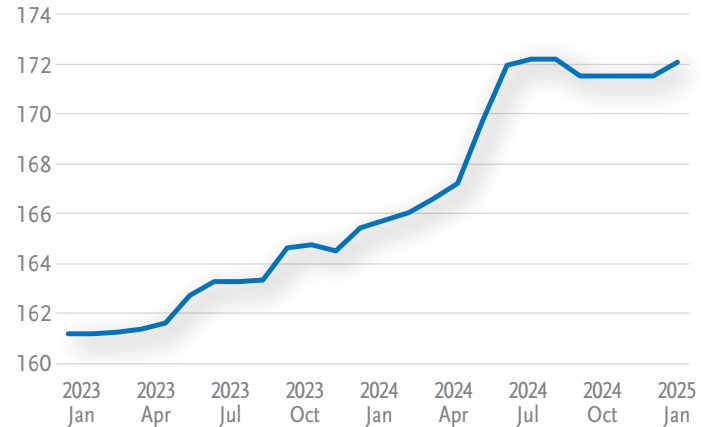
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Nonmetallic Mineral Products: Flat Glass (WPU1311). February.<sup>30</sup>

Figure 24

**Traffic Control Systems**

PRICE FORECAST	2025	2026	2027
			
	<b>4%</b> percent change in last 12 months	<b>0%</b> percent change in last 6 months	<b>0%</b> percent change in last month

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Machinery and Equipment: Intercommunications, Alarm and Traffic Control Systems (WPU11760303). February.<sup>31</sup>

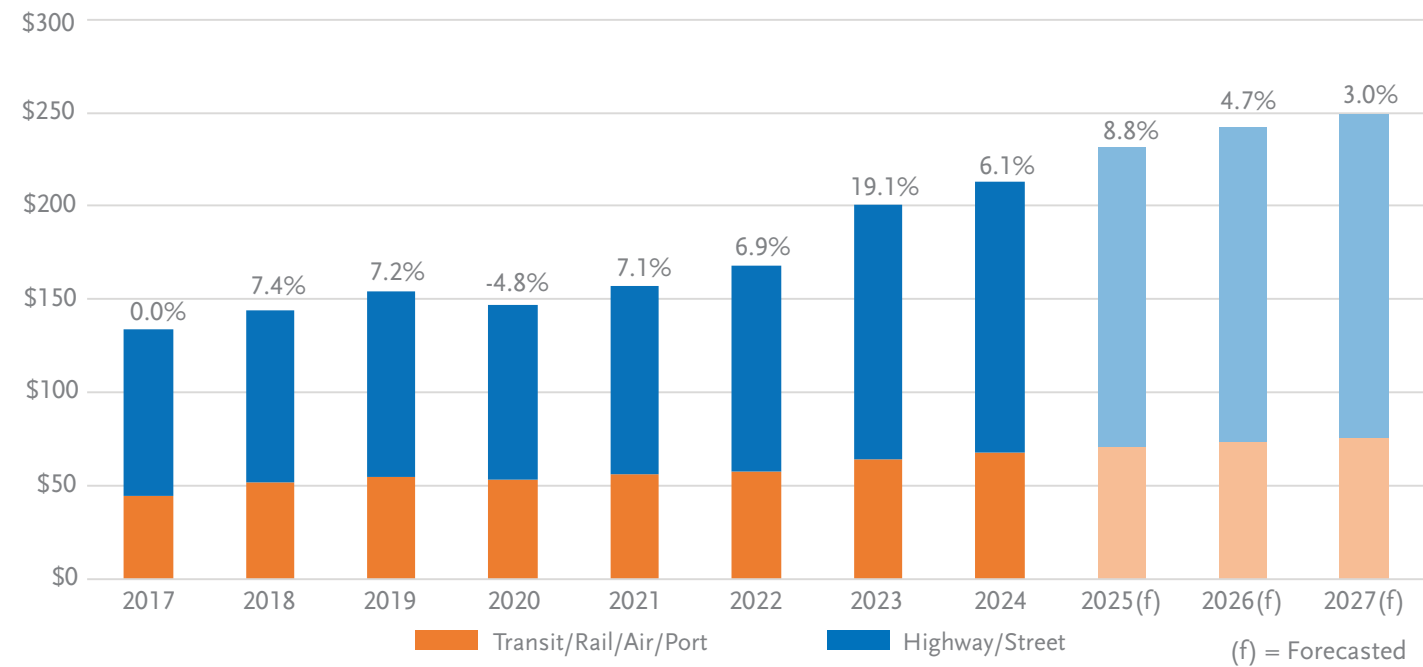
# Contractor Bidding

The construction sector has enjoyed sustained growth over the past two years, driven by data center development and substantial infrastructure investment, resulting in a 27% increase in non-residential construction and an 18% rise in transportation construction. It continues to be a contractor’s market as demonstrated by the continued spending levels shown in Figure 25 and the comparison of bid prices against the construction costs in Figure 26.

Risks and costs are increasing for megaprojects, and developing accurate bid estimates of the actual costs has been difficult for both contractors and owners. Contractors are sensitive to these risks because many have suffered major losses on megaprojects. Depending on the risk share between the contractor and owner, contractors are pricing the risk exposure into their bids.



Figure 25  
**National Annual Transportation Construction Spending (\$ in Billions), Year-over-Year Percentage Change and Forecast (2025–2027)**



Sources: US Census Bureau. 2024. *Construction Spending – Methodology*. August 1.<sup>32</sup>  
ARTBA. 2025 *Transportation Construction Market Outlook*.<sup>33</sup>  
Alisa Zevin. 2024. “2025 Forecast: Rate Cuts Expected to Boost Construction.” *Engineering News-Record*. November 20.<sup>34</sup>



## Recent Bid Results Analysis

A review of 25 publicly available bid results for competitive design-bid-build (DBB) transportation infrastructure projects in Los Angeles over the last six months indicates a trend of reduced competition and inflated bid prices. Although the analyzed projects are smaller in scope (averaging \$6 million) compared to Metro's projects, they offer valuable insights into prevailing contractor strategies. The observed trends suggest contractors are factoring significant risk into their bids.

While acknowledging the limitations of the sample size and project scale, these findings underscore the prevalence of risk-based pricing among contractors in the current market.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### NUMBER OF BIDS

**2 and 3**  
average number of  
bidders per project

**~25%**  
projects received  
only a single bid

**5**  
maximum number of  
bidders (observed in  
16% of the projects)

#### BID AMOUNTS

**>75%**  
average bid amounts  
exceeded the independent cost  
estimates by more than 15%

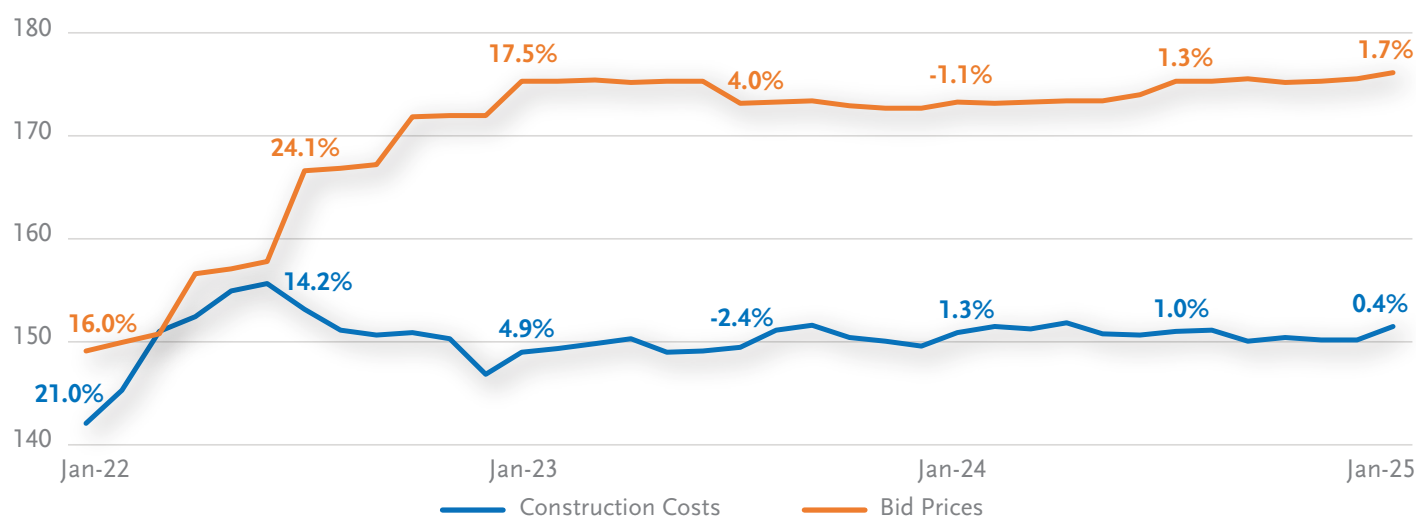
**57%**  
average percentage over the  
independent cost estimate  
of the bid amounts

**65%**  
average bid premium  
over the independent cost  
estimates for projects with  
a single bidder

**22%**  
average bid premium  
over the independent cost  
estimates for projects with  
four or more bidders

Figure 26

### Construction Costs versus Bid Pricing



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Inputs to New Nonresidential Construction (WPUIP231200) and New Nonresidential Construction (WPU801). February.<sup>35</sup>

## Escalation

In construction bidding, “escalation” refers to the practice of factoring in anticipated increases in material, labor, and other project costs over the project's duration. These increases are typically influenced by market conditions, inflationary pressures, and supply chain vulnerabilities. Notably, recent years have witnessed escalation rates exceeding prior projections. To accurately assess current market escalation, the construction industry utilizes several cost indices. Table 5 provides a comparative overview of current escalation rates, specifically from the Engineering News-Record Construction Cost Index (ENR CCI), which represents a national 20-city average of material and labor costs, and the California Department of General Services’ California Construction Cost Index (CA CCI),<sup>36,37</sup> which reflects conditions specific to California.

Table 5  
**Cost Index Escalation Rates for the Past Five Years**

COST INDEX	2021	2022	2023	2024
ENR CCI (national average)	5.8%	7.2%	2.7%	1.6%
CA CCI (Los Angeles and San Francisco average)	9.4%	13.7%	8.2%	3.0%

Sources: California Department of General Services (DGS). 2025. “DGS California Construction Cost Index CCCI.”  
Engineering News-Record. 2025. “Construction Cost Index History – As of April 2025.”

Higher-than-anticipated escalation makes it more expensive to build new projects and repair and maintain existing infrastructure. This could lead to a slowdown in construction activity because owners may delay, descope, or cancel projects due to the high cost. This makes it critical to apply accurate escalation when budgeting for construction. Based on the data presented in this report, industry forecasts, and professional judgement from cost estimators and economists, this report recommends that when preparing budgets, Metro implement a 6% escalation rate for 2025, then a 5% rate for 2026, followed by a 4% rate for 2027.

## Contract Terms and Conditions

Economic uncertainty stemming from federal policies is heightening contractors' sensitivity to contract language. Consequently, bids, especially for fixed-price DBB projects, will likely reflect increased cost and risk contingencies. Metro's strategic implementation of alternative delivery methods is widely favored by contractors because it facilitates the allocation of risk to the party best positioned to manage it. This approach empowers owners to better control costs, minimize change orders, and establish more certainty at key decision points to support accurate establishment of project budgets.

In response to tariff-related price volatility, contractors may seek to incorporate escalation clauses. These clauses, tied to objective market indices, enable contract price adjustments based on material cost fluctuations. This protects the contractor when material prices go up and benefits the owner when material prices go down. The inclusion of escalation clauses can also benefit the owner by mitigating the inclusion of speculative, inflated risk premiums in contractor bids. It is important to note that by incorporating an escalation clause, the risk associated with price volatility is effectively transferred from the contractor to the owner, requiring careful consideration of the chosen index and its potential fluctuations.









# Summary and Recommendations

The construction market is navigating a complex landscape marked by both opportunities and challenges. Robust project pipelines make this a contractor's market, and persistent headwinds such as increased labor demand, supply chain vulnerabilities, and economic policy uncertainties demand careful navigation by owners.

## Employment Summary

- > Due to Metro's stringent labor compliance and reliance on union labor, federal immigration policy changes are expected to have minimal impact on its construction workforce.
- > Should the residential and commercial construction sectors see an uptick in construction spending, federal policies or limitations on immigration could stress existing labor constraints in the US, putting additional price pressures within the construction industry.
- > Recovery from the Palisades and Eaton wildfires poses a major constraint on the ability of local jurisdictions and utility agencies to engage with and staff Metro projects because they are prioritizing recovery and rebuilding efforts. Metro could experience delays ranging from six to twelve months for these agencies to conduct design reviews, construction inspections, and permit approvals. Metro should seek streamlined permitting to mitigate this.
- > In a case study of the Maui wildfires, the scope of the recovery efforts requires doubling the construction labor force on the island of Maui, resulting in an inflation of labor wages of up to 20%, along with additional costs for housing off-island workers.
- > Considering the impact of the recovery and rebuilding efforts on the regional employment market in the aftermath of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires, the difference in the market's labor demand and available employment would increase by up to approximately 5% to 7% through 2028.

## Materials Pricing Summary

- > Tariffs have resulted in uncertainty that has roiled financial markets, lowered consumer confidence, and caused prices to rise.
- > Construction accounts for 52% of global steel consumption according to the World Steel Association. Consequently, steel tariffs are expected to drive price increases, elevating construction costs.
- > The reconstruction efforts in Pacific Palisades and Altadena are expected to drive increased demand for construction materials throughout Los Angeles County.
- > Metro can anticipate higher contractor bids (reflecting risk aversion) and significant escalation in cost estimates for projects in design, potentially impacting project viability.

## Contractor Bidding Summary

- > Construction spending has continued to grow with activity being driven by non-residential construction (27% increase) and infrastructure (18% increase) over the last two years. This growth has been tempered by sluggish residential and commercial construction spending.
- > Observed trends in reviewed bid results for Los Angeles construction projects for public agencies suggests contractors are factoring significant risk into their bids, driven by a perceived abundance of project opportunities and tariffs causing price uncertainty.
- > Escalation has ranged higher than anticipated in the past few years, and this report recommends using conservative escalation values such as 6% for 2025, then 5% for 2026, followed by 4% in 2027.



## Recommendations

In light of price uncertainties stemming from tariffs, potential workforce impacts due to federal policies, and the extensive reconstruction demands of the Palisades and Eaton wildfires, the following recommendations outline strategic approaches for Metro to successfully navigate the current complex construction market.

### Policy

- > Seek streamlined permitting to account for local jurisdictions likely diverting their permitting resources from Metro projects to prioritize wildfire recovery efforts.
- > Continue to use collaborative delivery methods like Construction Management/General Contractor (CM/GC) and Progressive Design Build to attract bidders.

### Cost Estimating and Schedule

- > Adjust cost estimates for higher escalation rates and contingencies for labor and materials in future life-of-project budget updates.
- > Institute or enable more frequent market pricing checks on cost estimates throughout the project delivery process.

- > Consider strategies to mitigate schedule impact from high-demand commodities by assessing long lead items, the timing of purchases, and owner-furnished materials, along with the possible opportunity to leverage purchasing power in collaboration with other agencies.

### Bidding and Contracts

- > Review upcoming construction contract terms and conditions and consider incorporating an escalation/adjustment clause and specifications based on an objective index to be flexible for price swings in construction materials.
- > Develop a list of approved material substitutes that can be used in the event of cost fluctuations of traditional materials.
- > In evaluating construction procurements, assess bidders' strategies for risk-based contingency application, including securing long-term agreements with domestic suppliers, and their ability to cultivate strong supplier relationships to effectively manage tariff-related complexities.



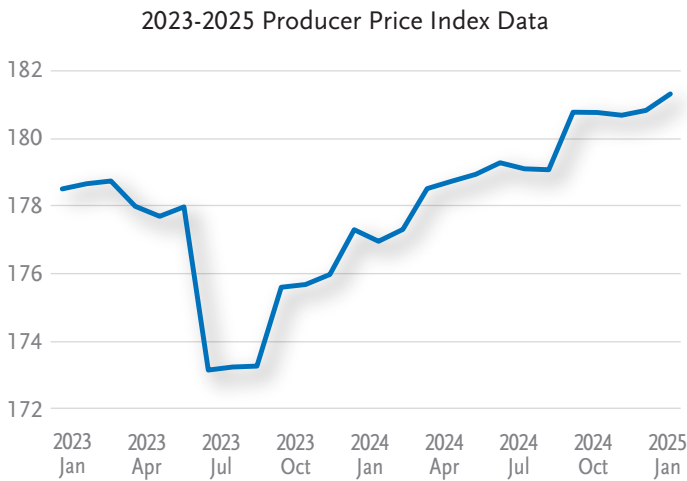
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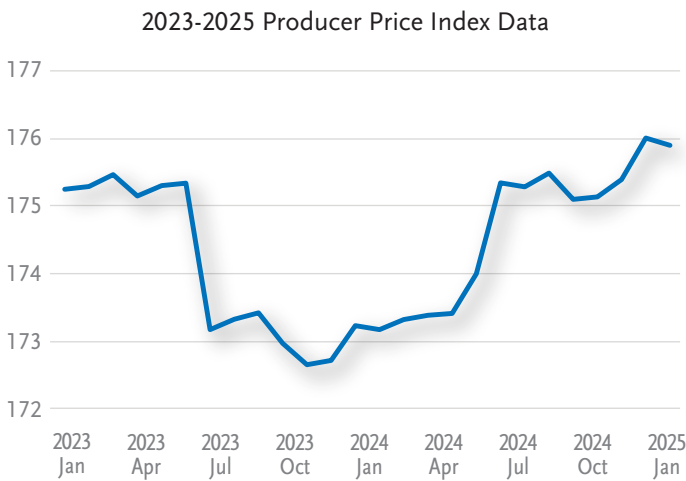
# Appendix A

Figure A-1  
Concrete Subcontractors



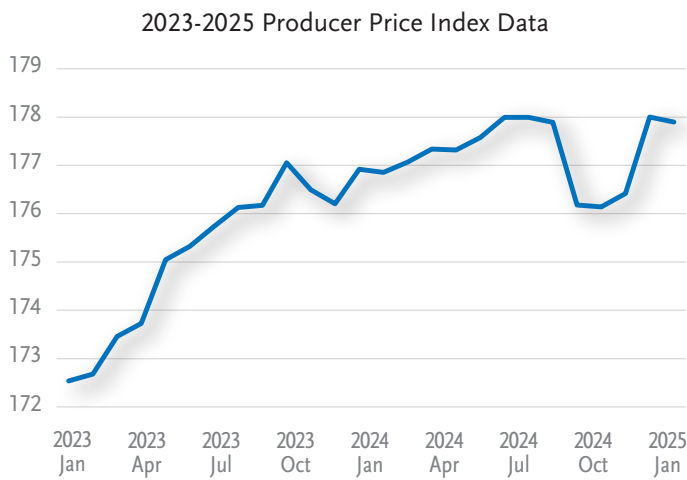
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Concrete Contractors, Nonresidential Building Work (PCU23811X23811X). February.<sup>1</sup>

Figure A-3  
New Non-Residential Building Construction



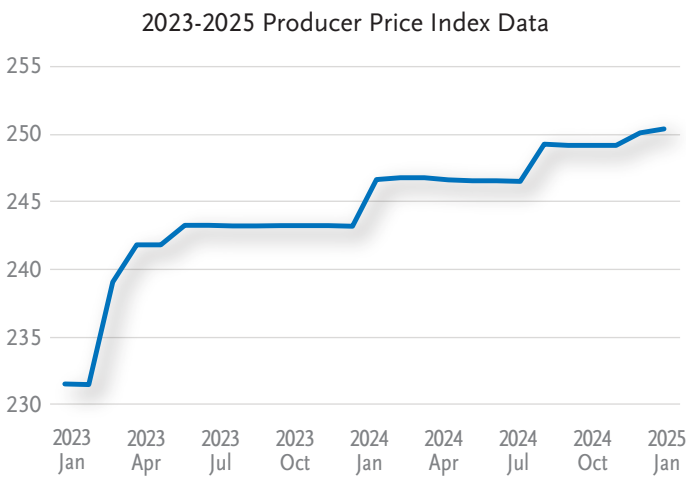
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Construction (Partial): New Nonresidential Building Construction (WPU801). February.<sup>3</sup>

Figure A-2  
Plumbing & HVAC Subcontractors



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Plumbing, Heating and Air-Conditioning Contractors, Nonresidential Building Work (PCU23822X23822X). February.<sup>2</sup>

Figure A-4  
Elevators & Escalators

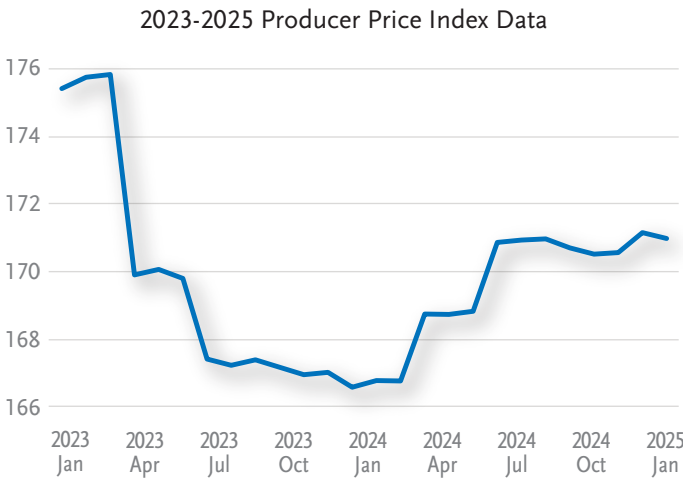


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Elevator and Moving Stairway Manufacturing (PCU333921333921). February.<sup>4</sup>



Figure A-5

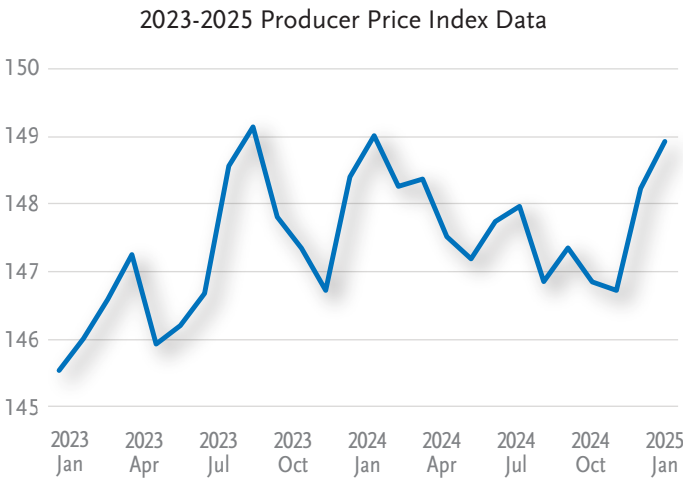
Electric Subcontractors



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Electrical Contractors, Nonresidential Building Work (PCU23821X23821X). February.<sup>5</sup>

Figure A-7

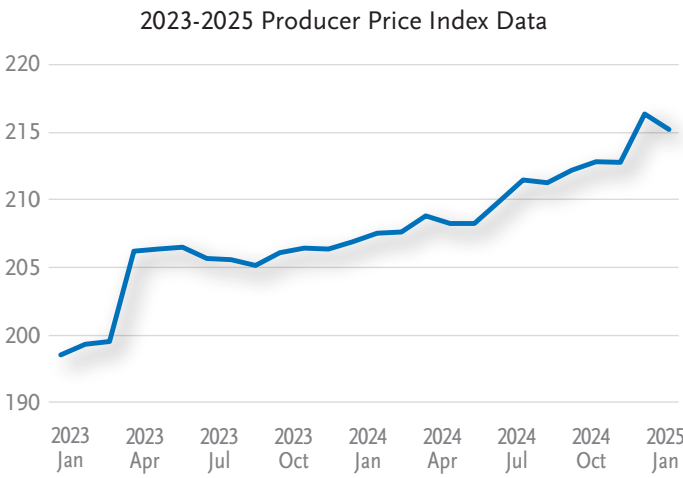
Highway



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Inputs to Industries: Net Inputs to Highways and Streets, Excluding Capital Investment, Labor, and Imports (WPU1231231). February.<sup>7</sup>

Figure A-6

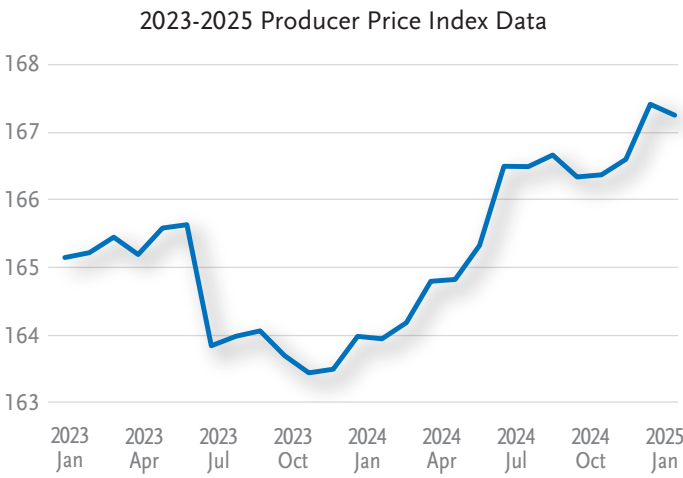
Roofing Subcontractors



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Industry: Roofing Contractors, Nonresidential Building Work (PCU23816X23816X). February.<sup>6</sup>

Figure A-8

General Construction

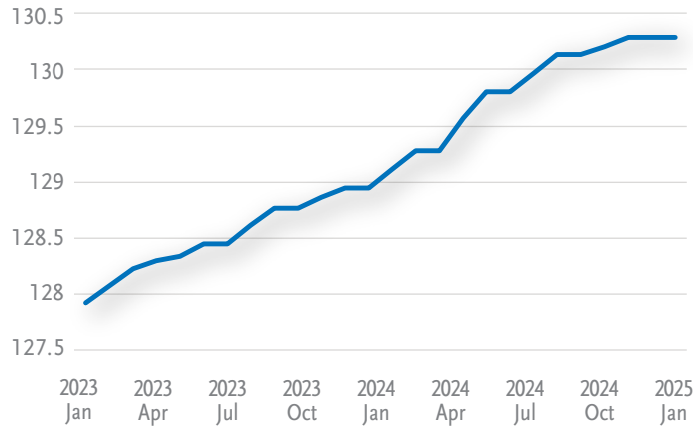


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Construction (Partial) (WPU80). February.<sup>8</sup>

Figure A-9

## Buses and Firefighting Vehicles

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

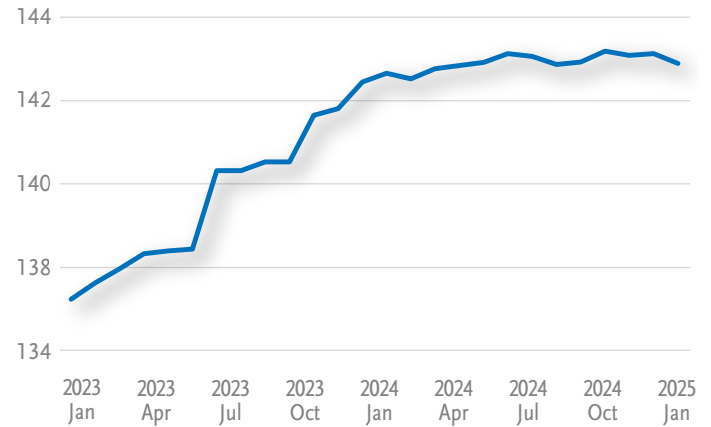


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Transportation Equipment: Buses and Firefighting Vehicles, Complete, Produced on Purchased Chassis (WPU1413027). February.<sup>9</sup>

Figure A-11

## Construction Machinery & Equipment

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

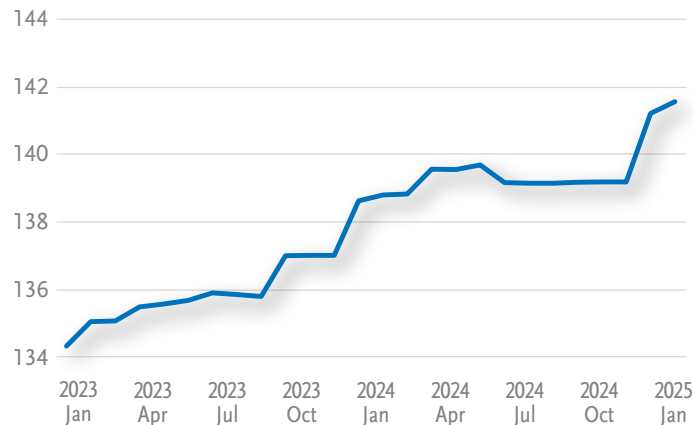


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Machinery and Equipment: Construction Machinery and Equipment (WPU112). February.<sup>11</sup>

Figure A-10

## Engineering Services

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data

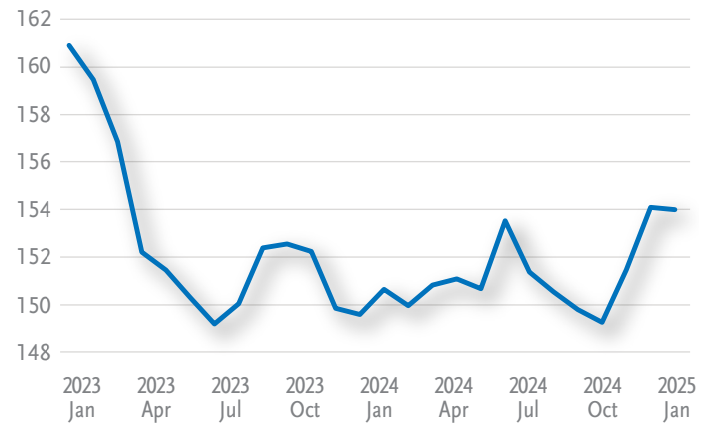


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Professional Services (Partial): Engineering Services (WPU4532). February.<sup>10</sup>

Figure A-12

## Trucking Services

2023-2025 Producer Price Index Data



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. Producer Price Index by Commodity: Transportation Services: Truck Transportation of Freight (WPU3012). February.<sup>12</sup>

# Appendix Endnotes

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