

# Obama aims to cap school test-taking

No more than 2% of class would focus on standardized exams, a major policy change.

By RICHARD A. SERRANO

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration executed a significant about-face in its education policy Saturday, calling for a cap on the amount of time students spend taking standardized tests.

The move comes amid growing opposition from teachers and many parents who assert that high-stakes testing has classrooms focused on rote preparation and has squelched creativity.

The announcement breaks a pattern of more than a decade of efforts by both the Obama and George W. Bush administrations to emphasize standardized

tests as a primary way to hold schools and teachers accountable for what students learn. Education reform groups as well as civil rights organizations have backed testing as a way to ensure that school districts provide better instruction to poor and minority students.

But in the new policy, the administration acknowledged the focus on testing was “consuming too much instructional time and creating undue stress for educators and students.” It called on states and school districts to cap the time spent on assessments at no more than 2% of classroom hours and pledged to ask Congress to enact the limit into law.

“Students do best on high-quality assessments that actually measure critical thinking and complex skills when they have been exposed to strong instruction, which should be the fo-

[See **Testing**, A11]

# Exxon’s shifting stance on science of climate change

A pioneer in global warming research, the oil firm began fueling public doubts by 1990.

By KATIE JENNINGS, DINO GRANDONI AND SUSANNE RUST

Throughout much of the 1980s, Exxon earned a public reputation as a pioneer in climate change research. It sponsored workshops, funded academic research and conducted its own high-tech experiments exploring the science behind global warming.

But by 1990, the company, in public, took a different posture.

While still funding select research, it poured millions of dollars into a campaign

that questioned climate change. Over the next 15 years, it took out prominent ads in the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times, contending that climate change science was murky. And it argued that regulations aimed at curbing global warming were ill-considered and premature.

How did one of the world’s largest oil companies, a leader in climate research, become one of its biggest public skeptics?

The answer, gleaned from a trove of archived company documents and the recollections of former employees, is that Exxon, now known as Exxon Mobil, feared a growing public consensus would lead to financially burdensome policies.

[See **Exxon**, A16]



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

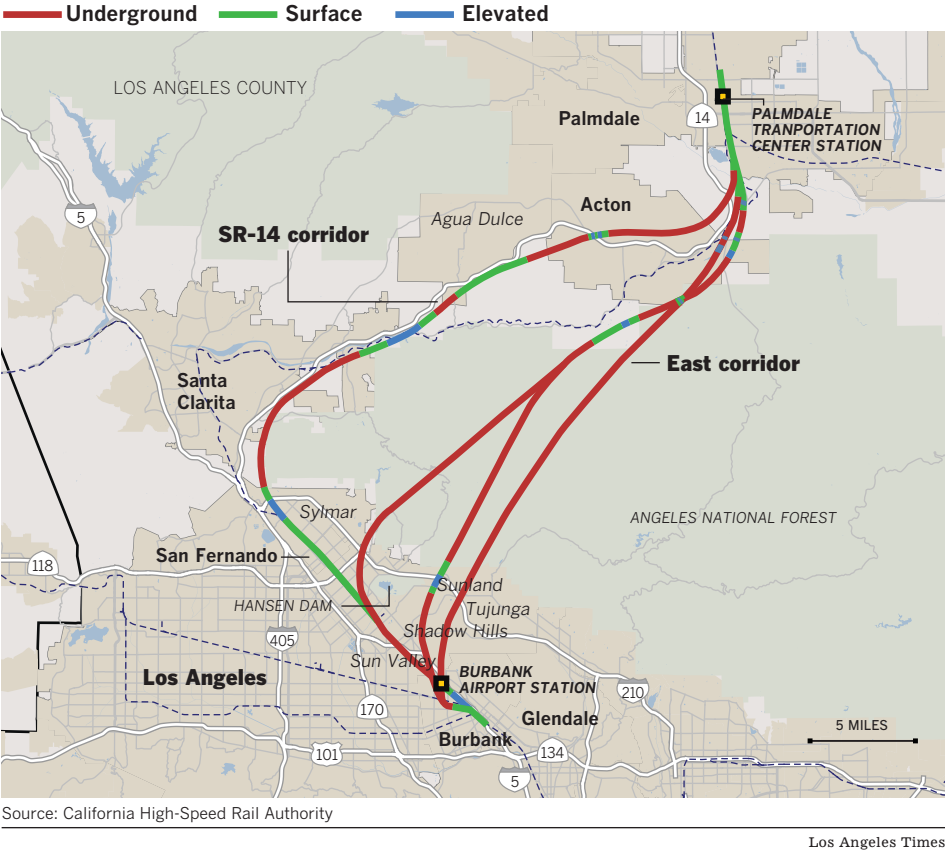
**THE BULLET TRAIN** project is behind schedule on land acquisition, financing and permits. Above, the 210 Freeway and Sunland Boulevard intersect near the San Gabriel Mountains, where tunneling will be required.

# TRACKING THE BULLET TRAIN

The high-speed rail project, requiring a huge tunnel system, is likely to miss budget and deadline targets, experts say

## Burbank-to-Palmdale project section

Proposed high-speed rail alignments along the 14 Freeway and through the Angeles National Forest.



By RALPH VARTABEDIAN

The monumental task of building California’s bullet train will require punching 36 miles of tunnels through the geologically complex mountains north of Los Angeles.

Crews will have to cross the tectonic boundary that separates the North American and Pacific plates, boring through a jumble of fractured rock formations and a maze of earthquake faults, some of which are not mapped.

It will be the most ambitious tunneling project in the nation’s history.

State officials say the tunnels will be finished by 2022 — along with 300 miles of track, dozens of bridges or viaducts, high-voltage electrical systems, a maintenance plant and as many as six stations. Doing so will meet a commitment to begin carrying passengers between Burbank and Merced in the first phase of the \$68-billion high-speed rail link between Los Angeles and

[See **Train**, A22]

MAUREEN O’HARA, 1920 - 2015

# Fiery leading lady held her own in film classics

By MYRNA OLIVER

Irish-born actress Maureen O’Hara was one of the biggest stars in films of the 1940s and ’50s, an era when it was common for leading ladies to be domineered by male heroes.

But not the fiery O’Hara. She more than held her own in her most heralded roles, even against as forceful a presence as John Wayne, with whom she made five films including the classic “The Quiet Man.”

“I was the only leading lady big enough and tough enough for John Wayne,” she wrote in her 2004 memoir, “Tis Herself.”

“Duke’s presence was so strong that when audiences saw him finally meet a woman of equal hell and fire, it was exciting and thrilling.”

She also proudly included in her book Wayne’s description of her: “She’s big, lusty, absolutely marvelous — definitely my kind of woman. I’ve had many friends, and I prefer the company of men. Except for Maureen O’Hara.”

O’Hara, 95, whose on-screen

[See **O’Hara**, A20]



Keystone/Getty Images

**‘THE QUEEN OF TECHNICOLOR’**  
The red-haired O’Hara, a native of Dublin, en route to a film shoot in Cuba in 1960.

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