

- 5) Authorizes that a local authority that enacted an ordinance or resolution prohibiting the use of a particular highway by certain vehicles to impose a fine or a penalty of up to \$100 for a violation.
- 6) Authorizes specified proposed ordinances or resolutions to be effective as to any state highway, or part thereof, if the proposed ordinance or resolution is submitted to Caltrans approval prior to the enactment, as specified.

This bill:

- 1) Requires Caltrans, in reviewing, and approving or rejecting, a proposed ordinance or resolution submitted by a local authority to regulate traffic on a state highway, as defined, to do both of the following:
 - a) Consider the cost of the proposed ordinance or resolution compared to any possible alternative solution to the issue that the proposed ordinance or resolution is addressing; and,
 - b) Requires Caltrans, if they reject the proposed ordinance or resolution, to provide written reasons and justifications for the rejection to the submitting local authority.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, “Highway safety is critical to the wellbeing of communities throughout California. Highway 74 and many rural roads across the state serve as vital lifelines for residents traveling to work, school, medical appointments, and other essential destinations. Yet many of these routes continue to face serious safety challenges, including deteriorating road conditions, increasing traffic demands, and accidents involving overweight or improperly routed commercial trucks. The tragic loss of Anza resident Tristin Bourgeois on October 31, 2024, serves as a painful reminder of the consequences of these hazards. His death left behind a grieving family and community and underscores the urgent need for stronger enforcement, improved road maintenance, and greater accountability in transportation planning. AB 1145 would help address these concerns by increasing transparency, accountability, and public engagement in transportation decisions affecting rural and mountain communities throughout California. The bill would require CalTrans, in reviewing alternatives submitted by local agencies, to evaluate associated costs and provide written explanations when recommendations are rejected. While it does not dictate the outcome of any transportation study, AB 1145 ensures that local voices are heard and that

communities receive meaningful responses regarding decisions that impact public safety. The loss of Tristin Bourgeois reminds us that transportation decisions have real human consequences. AB 1145 is an important step toward ensuring safer roads and a more transparent process for the communities that depend on them.”

- 2) *California’s Highway System.* California has a large network of highways and local streets and roads, consisting of almost 400,000 lane miles of pavement and over 25,000 bridges. The state highway system, owned and managed by Caltrans, is made up of roughly 51,000 lane miles and 13,000 bridges, including both federal and state highways. The state highway system provides mobility to millions of Californians, and serves as a major lifeline for goods movement, shepherding billions of dollars of products throughout the state every year. In fact, the movement of freight generates about one-third of California’s economy. State highways also support our state’s transit systems, provide biking and walking opportunities, and serve as a main thoroughfare in many areas, especially rural parts of the state.

According to The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), California continues to experience a road safety crisis. Projections from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA) estimate more than 4,400 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes throughout California in 2022, or about 12 people every day. Data from NHSTA for 2023 and 2024 estimates a year over year 5% increase in traffic fatalities. Across the state, traffic fatalities increased approximately 7.6% from 3,980 in 2020 to 4,285 in 2021. The increase of traffic fatalities in recent years led to the creation of the Vision Zero Network—a collaborative campaign with the goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. Today, more than 40 communities (including at least 13 in California) across the country have joined the Vision Zero Network.

- 3) *What are we doing to make roads safer?* In 2022, Caltrans issued a Director’s Policy on Road Safety (DP-36) that committed the department to a Safe System approach and reaffirmed the vision of reaching zero fatalities and serious injuries on state highways by 2050. Under the Safe System approach, Caltrans focuses on five elements: safe road users, safe roads, safe speeds, safe vehicles, and post-crash care. As part of the policy, Caltrans committed to prioritizing safety in highway planning, operation, construction, and maintenance, to focus on eliminating the most serious crashes rather than all crashes, and eliminating disparities in road safety outcomes.

Additionally, in 2023 Caltrans released their Road Safety Action Plan designed to review and track progress towards aligning Caltrans policies and practices with the Safe Systems approach. One step that was taken was to update the safety project prioritization methodology in the federally funded Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to better prioritize sites with the highest severity of collisions. Other goals planned to be completed by the end of this year include updating statewide planning guidelines to incorporate the Safe System Approach, developing a statewide decision-making framework for proactively identifying and prioritizing roadway safety investment, and developing trainings for project development teams on how to design safer roadways.

- 4) *Which trucks can drive on which highways?* There are two categories of truck tractor-semitrailers that are legal to operate on the roads in California. So-called Green trucks, also known as Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) trucks, are a type of large commercial truck permitted under federal law to operate mostly on the Interstate Highway System and certain designated primary routes.

The other type of trucks are so-called Black trucks, which are also called California legal trucks. Overall, Green STAA trucks are much longer than the standard Black trucks, which are limited to a maximum of 65 feet for overall length. Therefore, as mentioned, Green STAA trucks are much more restricted on what routes they can use in the state. Black trucks can operate widely throughout California on Interstates and have access to the entire state highway system except where specifically prohibited.

Trucks are also regulated by kingpin-to-rear-axle (KPRA), which measures how far the trailer's rear axle group can be from the kingpin. KPRA controls off-tracking, or how far the trailer's rear wheels cut inside the tractor's turning path. A longer KPRA means more inward drift, which can cause the trailer to swing into curbs, medians, or adjacent lanes.

Caltrans maintains the California Truck Network Map for state highways as the official government source for truck route information. All the truck routes in California are color coded to represent which types of trucks are allowed to travel on which routes in the state. Additionally, there is specific signage for certain allowable uses and advisories, such as a terminal access route which allows Green STAA trucks to exit the interstate and travel onto certain state and local streets for first and last mile. Also, many routes are considered KPRA Advisory routes, with signage in bright yellow warning trucks above a specified KPRA to avoid the route for safety reasons.

- 5) *How do we enforce safety laws for trucks?* The California Highway Patrol (CHP) are responsible for enforcement of California's truck operating laws and regulations. CHP operates Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facilities (CVEF) across the state to inspect the weight of trucks and commercial vehicles and provide safety inspections. There are currently 54 CVEFs in the state plus 76 mini-sites. According to Caltrans, there are three primary reasons for CVEFs: infrastructure preservation, truck operations, and highway safety. Highway pavement or structure life is affected by the weight and frequency of truck traffic. Heavy trucks cause far greater impact on pavement and bridges compared to passenger cars. A road test sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials established that it takes the passage of approximately 9,600 cars to equal the pavement damage caused by one legal truck weighing 80,000 pounds. Studies on pavement damage indicate that a 10% overload increases the pavement damage by as much as 40%. It is imperative to monitor overweight truck traffic to preserve and extend pavement life.

Additionally, every four years Caltrans and CHP prepare an Inventor of Needs (ION) CVEF report. This report's objective is to construct new CVEF on highways, conduct planning, engineering and traffic studies to determine the feasibility of construction/ upgrades, optimize safety, and establish virtual weigh stations.

- 6) *State Route 74 raises serious concerns.* State Route 74 (SR 74) is a 93-mile east-west highway extending from Interstate 5 in the City of San Juan Capistrano in Orange County to the southern city limits of Palm Desert in Riverside County. East of the City of Hemet, SR 74 transitions into an undivided two-lane highway passing through forested and winding terrains before reaching Palm Desert.

The area along SR 74 serves a mix of land uses, including low-density rural residential and agricultural spaces near Hemet. Near Mountain Center and the State Route 243 (SR 243) Junction are recreational areas, campgrounds, and small shops. Continuing eastbound toward Palm Desert, there are small rural communities such as Pinyon Pines, Alpine Village, and Pinyon Crest, along with isolated residential properties. Further east is the Coachella Valley Vista Point, which marks the beginning of a series of seven posted hairpin curves entering Palm Desert.

At least twelve hairpin curves exist between Hemet and Palm Desert, with posted signage and advisory speeds; however, many of the turns cannot be navigated safely by large vehicles. Hairpin curve signage is used when the

roadway changes direction by at least 135 degrees. SR 74 is a 65-foot Black California legal truck route with a posted KPRA advisory distance of 30 feet or less. This advisory warns commercial vehicle drivers that the route may not be well-suited for long wheelbases or trailer vehicles.

Residents of Riverside County have been concerned about the amount of trucks travelling along this route. Also, several hairpin curves have been identified as an operational and safety concern for large vehicles. As noted by the author, tragically, in October 2024, Tristan Bourgeois was killed driving to work on SR 74. A large dump truck pulling a trailer, both full of sand, lost control coming down the switchbacks above Palm Springs, tipped over, and collided with his pickup truck. Mr. Bourgeois was 27 years old.

His family started a petition drive to make SR 74 safer by limiting the use of the highway by certain trucks. The petition called for several changes, including a portable CHP weigh station, better Caltrans enforcement of restrictions on truck length and weight, improved signage advising trucks to use pullouts, a GPS warning system advising trucks to avoid the highway altogether, and a Caltrans study on accidents along the highway.

To begin this work, the author introduced AB 1145 last year. As passed by the Assembly, the bill called for Caltrans to conduct a study on SR 74 collecting specified data from the past 10 years, including the number fatal and nonfatal accidents, the number of incidents involving truck trailers, the number and types of citations issued for violations, including, weight-limit violations, and the number of instances in which an accident was caused by brake failure. Additionally, the bill required Caltrans to develop recommendations to improve safety.

- 7) *What can locals do about it?* As AB 1145 wound its way through the legislative process, Riverside County decided to move forward to make SR 74 safer. Current law allows local agencies to propose truck restrictions on highways under their jurisdiction by ordinance or resolution. For any restrictions that would apply to a state highway, the proposed ordinance or resolution must be submitted to Caltrans for approval.

Caltrans has established guidelines for this process. The Caltrans Truck Restriction Process identifies the steps to be taken by local agencies when proposing a truck restriction on a state highway. Specifically, the process requires a local agency to:

- **Prepare a draft truck restriction ordinance or resolution.** Requires the local agency to submit a draft ordinance or resolution detailing the justification for the truck restriction.
- **Prepare an initial study.** Requires the local agency to prepare a study which provides the information necessary to justify the restriction and indicates whether the proposed restriction is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The study requires input from Caltrans, the local agency, and CHP, as well as comments from the trucking industry, affected industries, and citizen groups.
- **Public review.** Requires the local agency to give public notice of the proposed restriction, including conducting a public hearing.
- **Receive comments and prepare a final truck restriction report.** Requires that all public comments be considered and resolved. The local agency must then complete a final report, including the draft ordinance or resolution, and submit it to the Caltrans District Office whom then forwards it to Caltrans headquarters.
- **Caltrans traffic operations submits recommendation to the Caltrans Director's office.** Caltrans Traffic Operations, in cooperation with the Legal and Environmental Division prepares a recommendation for the Caltrans Director.
- **Caltrans Director issues a written approval.** If approved by Caltrans, the Caltrans Director issues a written approval of the truck restriction and the draft ordinance or resolution.
- **Pass final truck restriction ordinance or resolution.** Requires the local agency to approve a final version of the ordinance or resolution.
- **Erect restriction signs and enforce restriction.** Requires Caltrans to erect needed signage at each end of the affected portion of the highway.

There are a number of examples of state route segments with specific truck restrictions based on factors such as the number of axles, gross weight, length, and cargo type. According to Caltrans, there are currently 25, some of which were put in place through the process described above and some were approved by the Legislature.

Last summer, Riverside County commissioned the required initial study for possible truck restrictions on a portion of SR 74, which include seven of the hairpin curves. The draft, which was finished in March 2026, is currently being reviewed by Caltrans and CHP. The county will then proceed to solicit public comment on the study. The County has determined that the proposed restrictions would not require a CEQA analysis.

The study notes that many of the existing state route segments with specific restrictions, “were enacted due to recurring safety and operational issues on mountainous roads with steep grades or limited shoulder areas. The main concern is often off tracking even at low speeds, where long wheelbases and trailer combinations require trucks to encroach on the centerline or shoulders to complete tight turns.”

Further, “Near the Coachella Valley Vista Point, AutoTURN results indicate that the four-axle WB-40 design vehicle must encroach on the centerline or shoulder to navigate the hairpin curves.”

Specifically, the study included recent examples of incidents on SR 74 involving heavy vehicles, including:

- June 22, 2022 – A downhill truck traveled onto the opposite side of the road and collided head on with a pickup truck. The driver in the pickup truck sustained a severe injury.
- October 17, 2023 – A downhill truck was repeatedly crossing onto the opposite side of the road, with overheated brakes, eventually losing control. The truck struck the mountainside, driving over the edge of the roadway, and became fully engulfed in fire. Fire response and law enforcement fully closed the roadway for approximately 3 hours, with periodic closures the following day for clean-up and repair. There were no injuries to the driver.
- February 29, 2024 – A downhill passenger car sideswiped a moving truck. The collision was fatal for the passenger car driver.
- October 31, 2024 – A downhill truck traveled onto the opposite side of the road, overturned, and collided with a pickup truck. The collision was fatal for the pickup truck driver.

The study includes recommended action, stating that “The analysis supports the finding that the constrained roadway on SR 74 justifies the restriction of vehicles with more than three axles on the 20.5-mile segment between the

SR 371 Junction to the Palm Desert city limits in both travel directions, as vehicles of that axle configuration cannot consistently stay within the traveled way at this segment.

“In addition, a reduction of the allowable KPRA length to 38 feet is also recommended to restrict any configurations exceeding this length. These vehicle characteristics are observable for vehicle operators and law enforcement, as compared to other forms of restriction.”

Further, in recognition of local considerations, the study details a few exceptions, including necessary local pickups or deliveries along the State Route, through required permits, and emergency and fire suppression vehicle driving in response to emergencies.

Finally, the study analyzed possible alternatives to the truck restrictions, “An alternative to the restriction of vehicles with more than three axles would be to widen the roadway at all the hairpin locations, especially in the Carrizo Road to Palm Desert segment, by several feet to help accommodate the swept-path movements of large trucks. However, this alternative is considered largely infeasible due to the magnitude and scale of engineering design, construction costs, and environmental impacts.”

- 8) *AB 1145 seeks to make Caltrans more deliberative and transparent.* Since Riverside County moved forward with the initial study to begin the truck restriction process with Caltrans, the author recently amended AB 1145 to focus on a statewide approach requiring Caltrans to be more deliberative and transparent with these local agency requests.

Specifically, as part of Caltrans existing Caltrans Truck Restriction Process, the bill requires Caltrans to consider the costs of the proposed ordinance or resolution compared to any possible alternative solution to the issue that the proposed ordinance or resolution is addressing. As noted by in the draft Riverside study, the alternative identified is widening the highway at certain points to accommodate the bigger trucks. The cost of widening a highway, especially with the conditions and terrain of SR 74’s location, would be extremely difficult and at a huge cost. AB 1145 would require Caltrans to have to fully examine and weigh these factors in their decision making.

Additionally, if Caltrans rejects the proposed ordinance or resolution, they must provide written reasons and justifications for the rejection to the submitting agency. The Legislature has previously signaled to Caltrans that more transparency in decision making about projects is warranted. Specifically,

SB 960 (Wiener, Chapter 630, Statutes of 2024), requires Caltrans to document and post to their website a justification if they do not include complete streets facilities on a project in a manner consistent with their guidance.

Writing as the sponsor of the bill, Riverside County states, “While the current version of this measure removes earlier State Route 74 specific safety study provisions, the County believes that AB 1145 would facilitate the establishment of resilient, ready, and connected communities. Our primary objective includes making Highway 74, a vital transportation corridor for businesses, commuters, and tourists, safer given that frequent accidents and hazardous road conditions have negatively impacted travel efficiency and economic activity in the region.

“AB 1145 is an important piece of legislation that will address road safety concerns that have plagued this region for years.”

RELATED/PREVIOUS LEGISLATION:

SB 78 (Seyarto, Chapter 743, Statutes of 2025) – Required Caltrans to prepare and submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2027, that evaluates current efforts and potential opportunities to streamline the processes and procedures for the delivery of safety enhancement projects on the state highway system.

SB 936 (Seyarto, 2024) – Would have required Caltrans to study and post it on its website by January 1, 2026, the 15 locations in the state highway system with the highest rate of vehicle collisions and to identify projects that could improve road safety at those locations. *SB 936 was vetoed by Governor Newsom.*

AB 1361 (Portantino, Chapter 147, Statutes of 2009) – Prohibited commercial vehicles with a gross vehicle weight exceeding 9,000 pounds from being operated on SR 2, between Interstate Route 210 in the City of La Canada Flintridge and County Route N4 (a.k.a. Big Pine Highway) in Los Angeles County, with exceptions.

SB 1729 (McPherson, Chapter 177, Statutes of 2002) – Provided that an ordinance or resolution enacted by a local authority prohibiting the use of a particular highway by certain vehicles may impose a fine or a penalty of up to \$100 for a violation.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, July 2, 2025.)

SUPPORT:

County of Riverside (sponsor)

OPPOSITION:

None received

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