
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Dave Cortese, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1479	Hearing Date:	7/8/2025
Author:	Tangipa		
Version:	6/23/25 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Melissa White		

SUBJECT: County road commissioner: Counties of Madera and Tehama

DIGEST: This bill authorizes the Boards of Supervisors of Madera and Tehama Counties to transfer duties of the County Road Commissioner to the County Director of the Department of Public Works.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Creates the Office of Road Commissioner for each county and, except in San Francisco, requires that every person who is appointed as Road Commissioner must be a civil engineer.
- 2) Requires the Road Commissioner to annually submit to the county board of supervisors a tentative road budget covering all proposed expenditures for county road purposes and manages personnel, equipment, and expenditures related to county road work.
- 3) Authorizes any county to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if the county transfers all of the Road Commissioner's duties to the county Director of Transportation. The Director is not required to have any special permit, registration, or license, and any civil engineering functions required to be performed by the Road Commissioner must be performed by a registered civil engineer acting under the authority of the Director of Transportation.
- 4) Authorizes any county to create an office entitled Public Works Director, combining the duties of Road Commissioner and Surveyor and any other compatible duties not legally required to be performed by another county officer.

- 5) Permits the Orange County Board of Supervisors to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if the board transfers all of the Road Commissioner's duties to an environmental management agency as specified.
- 6) Permits the Boards of Supervisors for Merced, Glenn, and Colusa counties to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if it transfers all of the Road Commissioner's duties to the county director of the Department of Public Works, as specified.
- 7) Provides that cities and counties receive revenue from motor vehicle fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees allocated from a fund called the Highway User Tax Account (HUTA), which is available for transportation purposes.
- 8) Prohibits the State Controller, or any other state officer, from making HUTA allocations to counties that have vacancies in the position of road commissioner after 180 days have passed since the position became vacant.

This bill:

- 1) Provides that the Boards of Supervisors of Madera and Tehama Counties may abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if the Board transfers all duties of the Road Commissioner to their respective County Director of the Department of Public Works.
- 2) Specifies that the Director of the Department of Public Works of Madera and Tehama Counties shall not be required to have any special permit, registration, or license.
- 3) Requires any civil engineering functions that are required to be performed by the Road Commissioner to be performed by a registered civil engineer acting under the authority of the Director of the Department of Public Works.
- 4) Finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable because of the particular needs of Madera and Tehama Counties, including difficulty in finding properly qualified candidates for the position of county road commissioner.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, "AB 1479 is a simple measure to streamline county operations and reduce unnecessary expenses. The bill allows the County Board of Supervisors to eliminate the County Road Commissioner position and transfer its responsibilities to the Director of Public Works. For years, Madera and Tehama Counties have relied on Public Works for these

duties, but outdated requirements have forced costly outsourcing of the Road Commissioner role. This inefficiency wastes taxpayer dollars without benefiting residents. AB 1479 ensures fiscal responsibility, strengthens county services, and modernizes governance to better serve Madera and Tehama Counties and their needs.”

- 2) *What is a Road Commissioner?* State law creates the Office of Road Commissioner in each county and, except in San Francisco, requires every person who is appointed as a Road Commissioner to be a licensed civil engineer. A Road Commissioner must annually submit to the county board of supervisors a tentative road budget covering all proposed expenditures for county road purposes. In conformity with the board of supervisors’ adopted policies and budget, the Road Commissioner manages personnel, equipment, and expenditures related to county road work.

Additionally, cities and counties receive a portion of the state’s motor vehicle fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees to fund local transportation needs, specifically local streets and roads. The State Controller allocates roughly \$3.5 billion annually from a fund called HUTA following a long standing distribution formula. Current law prohibits the Controller from making HUTA allocations to counties that have Road Commissioner vacancies after 180 days.

- 3) *Road Commissioner vs. something else.* Since 1979, any county can abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if the board of supervisors transfers all of the Road Commissioner’s duties to the County Director of Transportation. The Director of Transportation is not required to have any special permit, registration, or license. Any civil engineering functions that are required to be performed by the Road Commissioner must be performed by a registered civil engineer acting under the authority of the Director of Transportation.

Additionally, current law allows a county to consolidate the Road Commissioner and the County Surveyor under a Department of Public Works; however, there is still a requirement for a licensed engineer.

Numerous counties have pursued legislation to abolish their Road Commissioner position and they transferred those duties to a Department of Public Works or an environmental management agency. Specifically, the Legislature has authorized the counties of Colusa, Glenn, Merced, Orange, and Siskiyou to do so.

AB 1479 would add Madera and Tehama Counties to this list by authorizing them also abolish their county Road Commissioner position and move it to a

Department of Public Works. The director of that department would not be required to have any special permit, registration, or license; however the bill would require that any civil engineering functions that are required to be performed by the Road Commissioner be performed by a registered civil engineer acting under the authority of the Director of the Department of Public Works.

Writing as the sponsor of AB 1479, the Madera County Board of Supervisors note, “Over the last decade, the County has progressively empowered the Director of Public Works to provide these necessary services where possible under existing law. Further, because of recruitment and retention challenges, the county has often been forced to contract with outside entities for Road Commissioner services in order to comply with the requirements of existing law. This has created unnecessary taxpayer expense under current fiscally challenging circumstances. Maintaining quality services levels and standards has become more and more challenging for small to medium sized counties. We believe this bill is one step towards successfully meeting that challenge.”

- 4) *Double referral.* This bill was approved by the Senate Local Government Committee by a vote of 7-0 on July 2, 2025.

RELATED/PREVIOUS LEGISLATION:

SB 207 (Dahle, Chapter 24, Statutes of 2022) – Authorized the Board of Supervisors of Siskiyou County to transfer the duties of the Road Commissioner to the County Director of the Department of Public Works.

SB 79 (Nielsen, Chapter 33, Statutes of 2021) – Authorized the Board of Supervisors of Colusa County and the Board of Supervisors of Glenn County to transfer the duties of the County Road Commissioner to the County Director of the Department of Public Works.

SB 907 (Canella, Chapter 135, Statutes of 2018) – Authorized the Board of Supervisors of Merced County to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if it transfers all of the Road Commissioner’s duties to the County Director of the Department of Public Works.

AB 807 (Carpenter, Chapter 426, Statutes of 1975) – Authorized the Board of Supervisors of Orange County to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if it transfers all of the Road Commissioner’s duties to an environmental management agency.

AB 247 (Hayden, Chapter 83, Statutes of 1979) – Authorized any county to abolish the Office of Road Commissioner if the county transfers all of the Road Commissioner's duties to the county Director of Transportation.

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

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, June 18, 2025.)

SUPPORT:

Madera County (sponsor)

OPPOSITION:

None received

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