
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1532 (Committee on Communications and Conveyance) - Public Utilities Commission

Version: July 3, 2025
Urgency: Yes
Hearing Date: August 25, 2025

Policy Vote: E.,U. &C. 15-0, TRANS. 15-0
Mandate: Yes
Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would extend the “Access for All” (AFA) program by seven years, from 2026 to 2032, and would require a California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) commissioner to appear at a legislative hearing at the request of the Chair of a committee with jurisdiction over budget and policy issues relevant to the CPUC.

Fiscal Impact:

- Ongoing costs, likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, from January 1, 2026 to January 1, 2032 (ratepayer funds) for the CPUC to continue administering the AFA program—the transportation network company (TNC) wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) program—during a period in which it would otherwise have sunset absent this bill. The initial bill establishing the AFA program, SB 1376 (Hill, Ch. 701, Stat. of 2018) resulted in a subsequent budget change proposal (BCP) requesting ongoing funding of \$400,000 annually to implement its provisions. The Senate Appropriations Committee analysis of SB 1376 included the following fiscal impact: “The CPUC indicates this bill would result in annual costs of approximately \$337,000 (special fund) for two new positions to support transportation proceedings and rule development, to develop an enforcement program, and to conduct necessary litigation.”

Background:

Bill would extend the AFA program, which helps fund on-demand accessible transportation to individuals with disabilities. Prior legislation (SB 1376, Hill, Chapter 701, Statutes of 2018) required the CPUC to establish the TNC AFA Fund to provide competitive grants to transportation access providers for the purposes of supporting on-demand transportation options for individuals with disabilities, including Californians who require a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) for transportation. Under existing law, this fund is supported by a surcharge of at least \$0.05 on each TNC ride. TNCs must submit revenues from this surcharge to the TNC AFA Fund on a quarterly basis. Grants provided by the AFA program are intended to address the extent to which many vehicles operated by TNC drivers are not accessible for individuals with certain disabilities, which limits the extent to which on-demand transportation options are available for these Californians. Frequently, WAV on-demand services are unavailable in many communities and are operated by a limited number of transportation providers that specialize in services for individuals with disabilities. Even in areas where on-demand WAV services exist, the cost for these services is substantial – far exceeding other on-demand transportation options like TNC rides and taxis. Grants from the AFA program fund WAV rides through two mechanisms: funding to TNCs to help offset the

costs for making rides with WAV drivers more accessible and local access fund administrators (LAFAs) that provide subsidized accessible transportation services through programs at the local level. TNCs must meet certain benchmarks to obtain incentives through the AFA program.

Data submitted to the CPUC by participating TNCs indicates that costs for on-demand WAV rides through TNCs remain higher, with longer wait times than rides that do not require WAVs; however, data also indicates that costs for WAV rides in TNCs has declined over the course of the program while the volume of riders requesting rides has increased. While the CPUC's reports on the data reported by TNCs indicates that more work is needed to make services more timely and less costly, the data also shows that the program is substantially expanding access to on-demand WAV rides. For grants provided to local transportation programs, the CPUC's data also shows that the volume of Californians with disabilities accessing WAVs through the program is increasing. The CPUC's February 2025 report on the program's benchmarks for 2023 and 2024 states: "Newly available data from LAFAs this year shows demand for WAVs in the thousands of ride requests each quarter, averaging 9,097 ride requests per quarter from Q3 2023 to Q2 2024." The CPUC continues to provide funding cycles for counties' LAFAs to obtain grants. The CPUC's February 2025 report notes:

To date, CPUC has awarded a total of \$35.7M Access Funds to Local Access Fund Administrators. Of the \$35.7M, \$12.4M was awarded in Cycle 4 for funding year 2024-2025. On April 1, 2024, the CPUC received 12 LAFA applications for Cycle 4, including four MPOs, two RTPAs, four CTCs, and two Public Transit Agencies.

Existing law sunsets the AFA program on January 1, 2026. This bill would extend the program's operation until January 1, 2032. This bill extension would allow the CPUC to continue to fund programs that scale up and lower the cost of on-demand WAV transportation.

Bill aims to address issues in the Assembly regarding commissioners' availability for Legislative oversight hearings. This bill requires a CPUC commissioner to appear before a legislative committee with relevant jurisdiction at the request of that committee's chair. According to the author's office, this requirement is intended to address concerns about specific commissioners' availability to appear at legislative oversight hearings. The author's office has indicated that on two occasions, legislative committees in the Assembly have experienced difficulty obtaining the attendance of a CPUC commissioner at oversight hearings. On February 12, 2025, the Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee held an oversight hearing attended by CPUC Commissioner John Reynolds. At the hearing, several members of the Assembly commented on challenges the committee faced in securing the attendance of a commissioner. Information provided by the author's office to the Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee shows that the following events led to this discussion during the oversight hearing:

- February 3, 2025: The Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee sent an email to the CPUC requesting the attendance of a specific CPUC commissioner at the committee's February 12th oversight hearing.

- February 3, 2025: The CPUC indicates that they are unable to send the specific commissioner requested and instead say that staff best positioned to answer program questions will attend the hearing.
- February 5, 2025: Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee request the CPUC to reconsider sending a commissioner to attend the hearing.
- February 5, 2025: The CPUC responds, informing the committee that the CPUC is not reconsidering the attendance of a commissioner.
- February 10, 2025: Seven of the Assembly Members sitting on the Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee signed a letter sent to the CPUC imploring the CPUC to send a commissioner to attend the oversight hearing.
- February 12, 2025: Commissioner John Reynolds attends the oversight hearing and CPUC President Alice Reynolds sends a signed letter to the Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee apologizing for the miscommunication regarding scheduling conflicts and the attendance of a commissioner at the hearing. President Reynolds expresses a commitment to better coordinating communication to ensure commissioner attendance at hearings.

Proposed Law: This bill would extend the Access for All program, and would require a CPUC commissioner to appear at a legislative hearing at the request of the Chair of a committee with jurisdiction over budget and policy issues relevant to the CPUC.

Related Legislation:

SB 1376 (Hill, Chapter 701, Statutes of 2018) established the AFA program by directing the CPUC to set a per-trip fee on TNC rides to fund on-demand accessible transportation programs or partnerships to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in geographic areas of the state designated by the CPUC. Under existing law, the AFA program sunsets on January 1, 2026.

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