
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1532
Author: Committee on Communications and Conveyance
Amended: 8/29/25 in Senate
Vote: 27 - Urgency

SENATE ENERGY, U. & C. COMMITTEE: 15-0, 7/1/25
AYES: Becker, Ochoa Bogh, Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Caballero,
Dahle, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Limón, McNERNEY, Rubio, Stern, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Grove, Strickland

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: 15-0, 7/8/25
AYES: Cortese, Strickland, Archuleta, Arreguín, Blakespear, Cervantes, Dahle,
Gonzalez, Grayson, Limón, Menjivar, Richardson, Seyarto, Umberg, Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 65-1, 5/19/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Public Utilities Commission

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill extends the Access for All (AFA) program at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to fund on-demand transportation options at the local level for individuals with disabilities. This bill also requires the CPUC to modify an existing annual report on commissioner attendance at CPUC hearings.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CPUC to fix rates, establish rules, examine records, issue subpoenas, administer oaths, take testimony, punish for contempt, and prescribe a uniform system of accounts for all public utilities subject to its jurisdiction.

Under existing law, the CPUC consists of five members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Legislature may remove a CPUC commissioner for incompetence, neglect of duty, or corruption with a 2/3 vote in each house. Existing law authorizes the CPUC to establish its own procedures, subject to statute and due process. Any commissioner as designated by the CPUC may hold a hearing or investigation or issue an order subject to CPUC approval. (Article 12 of the California Constitution)

- 2) Establishes requirements for CPUC hearings. Under existing law all hearings, investigations, and proceedings must comply with rules of practice and procedure adopted by the CPUC. Existing law requires the CPUC to determine whether a proceeding is a quasi-legislative, adjudication, ratesetting, or catastrophic wildfire proceeding. Existing law specifies requirements for each type of proceeding. Existing law generally requires an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) to preside over, or assist a commissioner in presiding over, any evidentiary or adjudication hearing. (Public Utilities Code §§1701,1701.1)
- 3) Existing law requires the CPUC to establish a procedure for any party to request the presence of a CPUC commissioner at a ratesetting hearing, and existing law requires the assigned commissioner to be present at any closing arguments in a rate case. Existing law requires the principal hearing officer to present a proposed decision in a ratesetting case to the full commission in a public meeting. This presentation must contain a record of the number of days of the hearing, the number of days that each commissioner was present, and whether the CPUC completed the decision in time. (Public Utilities Code §1701.3)
- 4) Requires the CPUC president to assign a CPUC commissioner to act as the presiding officer in a catastrophic wildfire proceeding following the submission of an application by an electrical corporation regarding covered wildfire costs. (Public Utilities Code §1701.8)
- 5) Requires the CPUC to prepare an annual report on its activities and performance and requires the president of the CPUC to appear annually before the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature to present the report. (Public Utilities Code §§910 and 321.6)
- 6) Establishes the Deaf and Disabled Telephone Program (DDTP), which provides devices and services, including the California Relay Service, for individuals with hearing disabilities. Existing law authorized the CPUC to collect a

surcharge on in-state telecommunications access lines to fund the DDTP until January 1, 2025. (Public Utilities Code §2881)

- 7) Establishes the AFA program by directing the CPUC to set a per-trip fee on transportation network company (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. (Public Utilities Code §5440.5)

This bill:

- 1) Extends the TNC AFA program from January 1, 2026, to January 1, 2032.
- 2) Requires the CPUC modify its annual report regarding commissioner attendance at CPUC hearings to include specified information about the types of hearings, types of proceedings, and subject matter of hearings attended by commissioners.

Background

Bill extends 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 extension would allow the CPUC to continue to fund programs that scale up and lower the cost of on-demand WAV transportation.

Bill addresses ambiguity in CPUC reports about commissioners' attendance at CPUC hearings. This bill requires the CPUC to update an existing annual report to obtain more information about the types and nature of hearings that commissioners attend. According to the author's office, changes to this report are needed to address concerns about commissioners' lack of attendance at CPUC hearings. The author's office cites an annual report regarding the status of CPUC proceedings, which also provides information about commissioner attendance at all the hearings conducted for these proceedings. Below is a table summarizing data from the most recent annual report on the status of CPUC proceedings showing the number

hearing days attended by a CPUC commissioner or presided over by a CPUC commissioner.

	Total	Attended by a Commissioner	Commissioner Presiding
Number of Hearing Days	273	65	0
Percentage of Hearing Days	100%	23.8%	0%

While this report may indicate that CPUC commissioners rarely preside over hearing days and attend a small portion of hearings administered by the CPUC, the overwhelming majority of CPUC hearings tend to be prehearing conferences, oral arguments, and other evidentiary hearings that are intended to build the record of the proceeding. With notable exemptions, existing law generally requires ALJs to preside over these types of hearings. Existing law also establishes specific requirements for commissioners to preside over certain hearings, including a requirement for a designated commissioner to preside over covered wildfire proceedings. While the CPUC's report does not provide greater detail about the hearings attended by commissioners, it is likely that many of these hearing days are en banc or public participation hearings, which are more public-facing events intended to ensure that the CPUC engages directly with members of the public who are not intervenors regularly appearing before the CPUC. This bill would provide more detailed information on a regular basis to assess the extent to which CPUC commissioners are attending hearings in a manner that ensures that certain types of hearings and subject matters are not neglected.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 544 (Laird) of 2025, allows the CPUC to establish an expedited review and approval process for railroad crossing applications that are uncontested and do not need additional review or evidentiary hearings. The bill is currently pending on the Senate Floor.

AB 497 (Santiago, Chapter 287, Statutes of 2019) extended the operation of the DDTP until January 1, 2025.

AB 1514 (Patterson, Chapter 291, Statutes of 2019) authorized nurse practitioners to certify an individual as having a qualifying disability for the purpose of DDTP eligibility.

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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: Yes Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill will result in 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

California Association of Area Agencies on Aging
City and County of San Francisco
Marin Center for Independent Living
San Francisco County Transportation Authority

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author:

The content of this bill covers a scope of issues directly pertaining to the jurisdiction and experience of the Communications & Conveyance committee. Specifically, it extends the state’s ability to fund two programs administered by the CPUC that provide critical assistance to disabled Californians. The bill also includes new accountability measures for the CPUC based on this committee’s experience in engaging in oversight of the CPUC’s programs during a committee oversight hearing, wherein the committee discovered concerning trends about CPUC Commissioner attendance at hearings.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 65-1, 5/19/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Fariás, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher,

Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: DeMaio

NO VOTE RECORDED: Castillo, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Lackey, Macedo, Papan, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa

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