

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1599 (Ahrens)
As Introduced January 16, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to create the California Transit Stop Registry (Registry) and requires transit districts to use a unique identifier that conforms with the registry when publishing any dataset with stop information.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the Registry to include a standardized dataset for all the following for each transit stop in the state:
 - a) The transit stop's name;
 - b) The transit stop's location;
 - c) The amenities available at the transit stop; and,
 - d) A unique identifier for the transit stops, as established by Caltrans.
- 2) Defines transit district, for the purposes of this section, to mean an entity that qualifies as a claimant under the Transportation Development Act (TDA).
- 3) Requires a transit district to do both of the following on or before June 1, 2027:
 - a) Ensure that the name and location of each of its transit stops conforms with the corresponding name and location identified in the Registry; and,
 - b) Use the unique identifier that conforms with the Registry when publishing any dataset with stop information, including, but not limited to, General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) datasets, transit stop amenity datasets, stop-level ridership datasets, or any other format used to incorporate transit service information into a generally available trip planning mobile application.

COMMENTS

Caltrans' division of Rail and Mass Transportation in 2020 established the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) to improve the experience and cost-effectiveness of public transit for riders and operators through three actions: (1) installing an open loop contactless payment system that uses tap to pay enabled mobile devices, bank cards, or prepaid cards, to enable seamless travel across transit providers in order to make payment more convenient, (2) automating pricing flexibility, and (3) developing a platform for transit operators to share static and eventually real-time route information by establishing the California Minimum GTFS guidelines.

GTFS was created in 2006 through a public-private partnership between the transit agency in Portland, Oregon and Google and is the global standard for describing transit schedules and operations for use by trip-planning applications. Thousands of agencies worldwide use GTFS and it produces the most transit agency data.

According to Caltrans, "The purpose of the California Transit Data Guidelines is to communicate the specific criteria by which Caltrans determines whether GTFS schedule and real time data produced by transit providers and vendors meets the qualitative needs of riders (and therefore trip-planning applications that deliver this data to riders), transit providers, and regulators. The guidelines provide producers with a reference document for the characteristics of high-quality GTFS feeds. All transit providers and GTFS-producing vendors within the State of California are expected to work toward meeting the Guidelines in full."

The most common ways for transit riders to see the data are through a consumer-facing application such as Google or Apple Maps, a transit provider's signage, or through commercial displays. Caltrans guidelines for transit agencies recommend they provide the public accurate, complete, and up-to-date transit information.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) required the Federal Transit Agency (FTA) to collect GTFS data from transit agencies. In 2024 FTA passed regulations requiring transit agencies to standardize GTFS data and imposed this requirement on all agencies. As a result, most California transit agencies have standardized their trip data and annually submit the data to the federal government.

This bill would go a step further than the federal requirements for standardizing trip data and would require transit agencies to standardize transit stop data, including using a unique identifier for each transit stop as established by Caltrans. A standardized stop ID enables a mapping app to read a location for trip planning and would standardize a currently fragmented system that can make it harder for a transit user to determine what route they need to take to get to their destination.

For example, in the City of Banning there is a transit stop where four different agencies stop at the same location. Every agency calls the stop by a different name. Under this bill, Caltrans could assign that location an ID number, allowing the transit agencies to continue to call the stop by their unique names while also ensuring mapping applications understand it is the same location for routing purposes.

Standardizing stop data may also make other potential travel improvements easier to implement. Transit agencies have increasingly been shifting away from monthly transit passes and instead have been implementing fare capping. Fare capping limits the amount an individual rider would pay in a single month to never exceed a maximum amount. For example, a rider who cannot afford a monthly pass and instead pays for each individual ride would never have to pay in a single month more than the cost of the monthly pass. Fare capping has been shown to modestly increase transit ridership. According to a University of Tennessee Report, *the App or the Cap? Which fare innovation affects bus ridership?* monthly fare capping was found to increase annual bus ridership from 3.6% to 4.1%.

According to the Author

"Today, every transit agency names and labels its stops differently even when they're sharing the exact same physical bus stop. That means riders can see conflicting information on Apple Maps or other transit apps, making transfers confusing and unreliable. For working families, seniors, and people with disabilities who depend on transit, that confusion can mean missed connections, longer commutes, or deciding not to take transit at all. We can do better by making our system clearer, more consistent, and easier to use."

Arguments in Support

Streets for All, *a sponsor of this bill*, argues "Currently, transit stop information is often fragmented across agencies. When multiple transit operators serve the same stop, it may appear as separate entries in different datasets with inconsistent names or locations. This can create confusion for riders, trip planning apps, and planners who rely on accurate transit data.

AB 1599 addresses this issue by creating a single statewide registry and assigning a unique identifier to each transit stop. By standardizing stop information across agencies, the bill will improve data quality, simplify transit planning and coordination, level the playing field between transit routing software, and make transfers between transit services clearer for riders.

Improving the quality and accessibility of transit data helps make transit systems easier to use and more reliable. A statewide transit stop registry will support better trip planning tools, stronger coordination between transit agencies, and a more seamless rider experience."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) This bill seems to create significant new work for Caltrans, both one time, to establish the registry, and ongoing, to maintain and update the registry with new data. Initial costs are likely to be in the low to mid hundreds of thousands of dollars to establish the registry, while ongoing annual costs are likely in the low hundreds of thousands to cover the salary and related costs of in-house Caltrans staff. All costs would come from the State Highway Account (SHA). For its part, Caltrans estimates ongoing annual costs of approximately \$420,000 for three positions to maintain the database, which Caltrans describes as including validation of transit agencies data (SHA).
- 2) According to Caltrans, the bill will not require up-front costs because the bill calls for creation of a registry, not a database, so Caltrans would simply need to pull data from what local agencies post, which requires minimal information technology resources.
- 3) Costs of an unknown, but collectively significant amount, to transit agencies to ensure that the names and locations of transit stops conforms with the corresponding name and location identified in the California Transit Stop Registry and to use the unique identifier that conforms with the California Transit Stop Registry when publishing any dataset with stop information, as required by the bill. The state would need to reimburse the local costs, subject

to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates, and the most-likely funding source would be the General Fund (GF).

- 4) The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of GF structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

VOTES

ASM TRANSPORTATION: 16-0-0

YES: Wilson, Davies, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Carrillo, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Lackey, Macedo, Papan, Ransom, Rogers, Sharp-Collins, Ward

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: January 16, 2026

CONSULTANT: David Sforza / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093

FN: 0002663