

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1976 (Wicks) – As Amended April 27, 2026

Policy Committee:	Transportation	Vote:	12 - 4
	Local Government		8 - 2

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill makes it easier to approve and build pedestrian malls and traffic safety measures, largely by modifying requirements around public input.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Authorizes a legislative body of a city, among other things, to establish a pedestrian mall, prohibit vehicle traffic on a pedestrian mall and pay for related improvements with any available monies, including city general funds and prescribes procedures by which the legislative body may do so.
- 2) Prohibits a county board of supervisors or a city council (local governing body) from holding a community input meeting on a proposed pedestrian or bicycle safety project for county or city highway, as applicable, after the project is included in an approved plan that will be implemented as part of the circulation element of the local jurisdiction’s general plan.
- 3) Conditions the ability of a local governing body to terminate construction of a pedestrian or bicycle project, at a public meeting where (a) a contract is awarded for the project or (b) staff are directed to begin the project, or anytime thereafter, upon the local governing body making both the following findings, based the preponderance of the evidence: (a) the public benefit of not delivering the project outweighs the safety benefit to the community and (b) the cost of the safety project cannot be funded given the budget of the county or the budget for the project.
- 4) Prohibits a local governing body, when establishing a process for local residents to submit a petition to request installation of a traffic calming measure, from requiring more than a majority of the number of persons whose residences are located within 1,000 feet of a proposed traffic calming measure.

FISCAL EFFECT:

No state costs. The bill makes authorizations and restrictions of local government but does not mandate any activity; therefore, the bill should not result in costs to local government that the state would then need to reimburse.

COMMENTS:

Pursuant to existing laws, local authorities can make it difficult to install traffic-calming measures and pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly infrastructure improvements. For example, a local government may require a supermajority of impacted residents to approve a proposed traffic-calming measure, such as a speed bump. Or, a local government may convene the public for input on a proposed bike lane or similar road feature, or even cancel installation of the feature, even though the local government previously approved such features in the circulation element of its general plan.

Many see these local actions as reflective of outdated practices, inefficient or simply unreasonable. For example, a coalition of organizations that advocate making streets more usable by and safer for everyone on those streets, not just those in automobiles, describes the situation thusly:

California communities are facing a persistent safety crisis on their streets, yet the delivery of proven solutions is often slowed or blocked by outdated statutes, duplicative processes, and unreasonable administrative hurdles. Projects that have already gone through extensive planning and public engagement can be delayed or canceled late in the process. Residents seeking basic traffic calming improvements are sometimes required to gather excessive levels of support, creating inequitable barriers to safer streets. In addition, current law limits the ability of cities to respond quickly to safety needs on slow streets, and the existing Pedestrian Mall Law reflects an outdated framework that does not match today's goals for vibrant, people-first public spaces.

These bill proponents see this bill as “a comprehensive bill that advances safe, people-centered streets by modernizing outdated laws, streamlining project delivery, and removing unnecessary barriers to implementing pedestrian and bicycle improvements.” Similarly, the author describes the bill as a “more streamlined processes for projects that provide additional safety measures for local communities and align with the state’s climate and equity goals.”

In contrast, organizations representing local governments object to the bill, describing it, as the League of California Cities puts it, “restricting meaningful public input, expanding exemptions from environmental review, eroding local control, and eliminating important fiscal and legal protections currently available to cities under existing law,” with the league noting as a “central concern” the bill’s “clear effort to limit public participation in local transportation and street design decisions.”

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