

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

AB 2168 (Wicks) – As Amended April 13, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Active Transportation Program: guidelines

**SUMMARY:** Expands the types of projects eligible for Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding to include projects that provide access to transit and requires the California Transportation Commission to include in ATP guidelines penalties for failure to use ATP funds in a timely manner. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Expands the goals of ATP to include increasing the proportion of trips accomplished by accessing public transit stops, stations, and other transit facilities.
- 2) For the purposes of the development of ATP project eligibility guidelines, revises and expands the definition of “safe routes to transit” to include projects that encourage access to transit station areas, planned transit, transit corridors, and transit-oriented development planning areas, and projects that will expand access to transit in underserved or rural areas.
- 3) Adds the following to the project selection criteria the CTC must consider in the development of ATP guidelines:
  - a) Potential for encouraging increased access to public transit.
  - b) Recommendations to maximize commitments of state transportation improvement program funds to projects funded by the program in order to scale funding for larger or network-level active transportation improvements.
- 4) Requires, instead of authorizes, the ATP guidelines to include incentives intended to maximize the potential for attracting funds other than program funds for eligible projects
- 5) Requires the ATP guidelines to include a progressive range of penalties that range from a deduction of points to disqualification for an applicant that failed to use previously received program funds in a timely while considering factors not under the control of an applicant.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the ATP within the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to encourage increased use of active modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, expresses the intent of the Legislature that the program achieve all of the following goals:
  - a) Increase the proportion of trips accomplished by biking and walking.
  - b) Increase safety and mobility for nonmotorized users.
  - c) Advance the active transportation efforts of regional agencies to achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals pursuant to Senate Bill 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) and Senate Bill 391 (Chapter 585, Statutes of 2009).
  - d) Enhance public health, including reduction of childhood obesity through the use of programs including, but not limited to, projects eligible for Safe Routes to School Program funding.

- e) Ensure that disadvantaged communities fully share in the benefits of the program.
  - f) Provide a broad spectrum of projects to benefit many types of active transportation users (Streets and Highways (SHC) §2380).
- 2) Requires the CTC to ensure that eligible projects meet one or more of the above goals and authorizes it to give increased weight to projects meeting multiple goals (SHC §2382).
- 3) Requires the CTC to develop ATP guidelines and project selection criteria in consultation with an ATP Workgroup; the guidelines must include topics like project eligibility, application timelines, application rating and ranking criteria, project monitoring, reporting, and transparency, and project performance measurement (SHC §2382).
- 4) Requires the guidelines to ensure that no less than 25% of overall program funds benefit disadvantaged communities during each program cycle (SHC §2382).
- 5) Requires the CTC to include, but not be limited by, the following project types in its project eligibility guidelines:
- a) Development of new bikeways and walkways, or improvements to existing bikeways and walkways, that improve mobility, access, or safety for nonmotorized users.
  - b) Secure bicycle parking at employment centers, park and ride lots, rail and transit stations, and ferry docks and landings.
  - c) Bicycle-carrying facilities on public transit, including rail and ferries.
  - d) Installation of traffic control devices to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - e) Elimination of hazardous conditions on existing bikeways and walkways.
  - f) Maintenance of bikeways and walkways.
  - g) Recreational trails and trailheads, park projects that facilitate trail linkages or connectivity to nonmotorized corridors, and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails.
  - h) Safe Routes to School projects that improve the safety of children walking and bicycling to school.
  - i) Safe routes to transit projects, which encourage transit by improving biking and walking routes to mass transportation facilities and schoolbus stops.
  - j) Educational programs to increase biking and walking, and other noninfrastructure investments that demonstrate effectiveness in increasing active transportation (SH C §2382).
- 6) Requires the CTC to include, but not be limited by, the following criteria in project selection guidelines:
- a) Demonstrated needs of the applicant.
  - b) Potential for reducing pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities.
  - c) Potential for encouraging increased walking and bicycling, especially among students.
  - d) Potential for encouraging increased access to public transit.
  - e) Identification of safety hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - f) Identification of walking and bicycling routes to and from schools, transit facilities, stops and stations, and community centers.

- g) Identification of the local public participation process that culminated in the project proposal, which may include noticed public meetings and consultation with local stakeholders.
- h) Benefit to disadvantaged communities.
- i) Cost-effectiveness, defined as maximizing the impact of the funds provided.
- j) The adoption by a city or county applicant of a bicycle transportation plan, a pedestrian plan, a safe routes to school plan, or an overall active transportation plan.
- k) Use of the California Conservation Corps or a qualified community conservation corps as construction partners.
- l) Other factors, such as potential for reducing congestion, improving air quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing and improving connectivity and mobility of nonmotorized users.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *According to the author*, “AB 2168 makes targeted, commonsense improvements to ensure California's Active Transportation Program (ATP) funds are spent effectively and efficiently. The legislation modernizes the definition of safe routes to transit, shifting focus toward transit-rich corridors, infill opportunity areas, and station walksheds — places where active transportation investments provide the deepest community benefits, giving people the option to not drive at all. It adds transit access as an explicit project selection criterion, aligning ATP priorities with California's broader climate and housing goals. It rewards applicants who leverage State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds to active transportation. And it establishes a clear penalty structure for grantees who fail to spend funds on time, ensuring that awarded dollars move from paper to pavement without delay. Taken together, AB 2168’s reforms sharpen the program's focus, reward strategic investment, and hold awardees accountable”.

*Evolution of Safe Routes to Schools to ATP.* SB 99 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 359, Statutes of 2013 created the ATP, which represents an amalgamation of historically small, dedicated grant programs for Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), bicycle programs, and recreational trails. According to the Senate Budget Committee analysis of SB 99, “The intent of combining this funding is to improve the flexibility of these funds and reduce the administrative burden of having several small independent grant programs.”

The concept of SRTS was indirectly inspired by a 1973 federal law (itself inspired by Denmark) making grants to states to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety. This provided the foundation, many years later, for Congress to pass the federal SRTS program in 2005 with the goal of improving the ability of primary and middle school students to safely walk and bicycle to school. In 2012, Congress combined the SRTS program with other bicycling and walking programs into the Transportation Alternatives Program, which funds a more expansive suite of on- and off-road trail, traffic calming, and environmental mitigation projects but consequently cut funding for SRTS.

*ATP is chronically over-subscribed.* Today, the ATP is competitive program funded by state (e.g., SB 1) and federal sources at approximately \$123 million annually and while continuing to support SRTS projects it has evolved to fund bike paths and related facilities, safe routes to transit, other non-motorized forms of transport (e.g., scooters, wheelchairs), development of bike and other active transportation planning documents, and education and “encouragement”

activities. It is a highly popular program—according to the CTC, in its 7<sup>th</sup> and most recent cycle (2025), one of the most competitive since inception, it received 277 project applications requesting \$2.5 billion in funds, about 15 times the \$169 million that was available. Half of total funding is reserved for statewide projects, 40% is reserved for projects within the boundaries of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in urban areas with populations greater than 200,000, and the remaining 10% is dedicated for small urban/rural regions with populations less than 200,000.

As stated by the CTC, “The Active Transportation Program continues to face significant unmet demand, as communities across the state look to the program to fund critical active transportation projects needed to meet California’s safety, climate, and equity goals. Sustained and additional funding is needed to fund the hundreds of critically needed high-quality projects that remain unfunded each cycle.” Through the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle, 1,148 projects have been programmed (*i.e.*, funding approved) and 551 or 48% of projects have been completed.

*Is greater emphasis on transit access needed or justified?* This bill requires the CTC, when developing ATP project eligibility and selection guidelines, to include as a new criterion the potential for encouraging increased access to public transit. This bill does not define “transit access” but the sponsors have described it as extending a bike or pedestrian trip or connecting transportation networks like a bike path to a transit facility. *According to the author:*

Current ATP statute and guidelines do not adequately prioritize the locations where active transportation investments generate the greatest return on investment. Specifically, the program’s existing definition of “safe routes to transit” fails to specify the broader landscape of transit-supportive geography—station areas, frequent transit corridors, transit stop walksheds, and infill—where active transportation improvements can most effectively connect people to transit and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

In a budget constrained environment, the author believes that “state must be strategic about where and how it directs its limited active transportation dollars.”

It is unclear if this bill would result in outcomes substantially different than the status quo. Program guidelines and scoring criteria that the CTC has established already incentivize applicants to consider project “need in the context of connectivity to key destinations including connections to transit, mobility to access everyday needs and services, and local public health concerns” and the CTC awards the greatest number of points (up to 38 out of 100) to this criterion. Projects facilitating improved transit connections, for example, already score higher today and an applicant can earn additional points for projects that transform a “non-motorized environment” (*e.g.*, complementing transit) or supporting existing or planned housing (especially affordable housing).

In fact, in the most recent round of ATP projects under consideration, the CTC awarded funding for 13 projects (in the statewide/small urban/rural buckets), 11 of which provide some connection to transit facilities such as public/school buses or light rail. For example, a project in the City of Inglewood will provide a safer means of connecting residents in the surrounding disadvantaged community to the Westchester/Veterans transit station, Big Blue Bus Route 14 bus stop, and LA Metro Bus 857 stop, and another improvement will connect communities east of Interstate-405 to the LA Metro network (through the transit station).

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to update ATP goals and guidelines to clarify eligibility of a wider scope of transit access projects and to modernize the program's statute to recognize the benefits of, for example, connecting a bike pathway to a transit facility. At the same time, the committee urges caution in over-weighting certain types of projects for modes of transport more commonly found in urban areas to avoid inadvertently disadvantaging less urban or rural regions of the state without the population density to support extensive public transit networks.

In many rural communities, the only form of transit is a fixed bus route with limited service or paratransit and populations or ridership numbers would not likely support significant investments in transit networks. Transportation needs are, by definition, locally and geographically determined and while the state has expressed some preference for modes that minimize greenhouse gas emissions or VMTs, within the ATP context, all modes eligible for funding can be characterized as reducing pollution to the extent they avoid or minimize VMTs.

Finally, despite "transit access" projects being already eligible for higher scoring, there are other criteria, pursuant to ATP's statutory goals, that the CTC is obligated to consider like access to everyday needs and services by walking or bicycling for persons of all ages and disabilities—not just commuters or transit users—or local public health concerns (e.g., childhood obesity). In fact, among other statutory goals, the CTC is mandated to consider "a broad spectrum of projects to benefit many types of active transportation users". This succinctly captures the CTC's delicate balancing act when considering six statutory goals and a minimum of ten eligible project types, also dictated by statute, particularly for a significantly over-subscribed program.

*Writing in support*, California Bicycle Coalition states: "AB 2168 makes critical updates to ensure that ATP investments more effectively increase access to public transit, particularly in transit-rich and infill areas. By prioritizing projects that improve walking and bicycling connections to transit, this bill helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, supports California's climate goals, and promotes healthier, more sustainable communities. Additionally, the bill enhances accountability by introducing clearer expectations and potential consequences for projects that do not use awarded funds in a timely manner. This ensures that limited transportation dollars are used efficiently and that high-impact projects are delivered without unnecessary delays."

*Writing in opposition*, the Nevada County Transportation Commission states: "AB 2168 would redirect limited dollars to more urbanized areas of the state and would disadvantage communities like those in Nevada County. This policy shift is in direct conflict with the state's other climate related goals which encourage all communities – urban, suburban, and rural – to become more multimodal. Finally, while NCTC understands the rationale for imposing penalties to ensure timely use of funds, the bill's approach is overly punitive and does not adequately account for delays outside a lead agency's control. Projects are frequently impacted by factors such as environmental permitting timelines, utility coordination, right-of-way acquisition, supply chain constraints, and funding synchronization across multiple sources. Penalizing agencies for these realities risks discouraging participation in state programs and undermining the very project delivery goals the bill seeks to advance."

*Related legislation.* AB 1475 (Soto), Chapter 663, Statutes of 1999 required Caltrans to establish and administer a “Safe Routes to School” program pursuant to federal law for the construction of bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming projects.

SB 99 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 359, Statutes of 2013 subsumed the “Safe Routes to School” program into a newly created ATP.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

California Bicycle Coalition  
PeopleForBikes  
Streets for All  
Monterey-Salinas Transit District (if amended)  
One Individual

**Opposition**

Nevada County Transportation Commission (unless amended)  
Riverside County Transportation Commission

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