

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2372 (Hoover) – As Amended April 6, 2026

Policy Committee: Transportation

Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill exempts an authorized emergency vehicle from any requirement to pay a toll or other charge on a vehicular crossing, toll highway or high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane if the vehicle is authorized as an emergency vehicle by the Department of the California Highway Patrol (CHP), pursuant to existing law.

The bill also, in lieu of the exemption described above and upon the request of a private or public local emergency service provider, requires the owner or the operator of a toll facility to, in good faith, enter into an agreement to establish mutually agreed-upon terms for the use of the toll facility by the emergency service provider, including, but not limited to, being exempt from toll payment. The bill states that this requirement does not prohibit the owner or operator of a toll facility from having a policy that meets or exceeds the requirements of this section.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Minor state costs, if any.

COMMENTS:

Current law defines an authorized emergency vehicle as, among other things, any publicly owned and operated ambulance, lifeguard, or lifesaving equipment or any privately owned or operated ambulance licensed by the Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol to operate in response to emergency calls. The law exempts an authorized emergency vehicle—including, as noted in the preceding line, a publicly owned or privately owned ambulance licensed by CHP—from the requirement to pay a toll or other charge on a vehicular crossing, toll highway or HOT lane if:

- 1) The authorized emergency vehicle is properly displaying an exempt California license plate, and is properly identified or marked as an authorized emergency vehicle, including, but not limited to, displaying an external surface-mounted red warning light, blue warning light, or both, and displaying public agency identification, including, but not limited to, “Fire Department,” “Sheriff,” “Police” or “Ambulance.”
- 2) The vehicle is being driven while responding to or returning from an urgent or emergency call, engaged in an urgent or emergency response, or engaging in a fire station coverage assignment directly related to an emergency response.

- 3) The driver of the vehicle determines that the use of the toll facility shall likely improve the availability or response and arrival time of the authorized emergency vehicle and its delivery of essential public safety services.

So, it would seem clear, then, that an ambulance, whether publicly owned or privately owned, is exempt from paying tolls, etc., when certain conditions are met.

However, the statute providing for the exemption references an authorized emergency vehicle “properly displaying an exempt California license plate.” And, consistent with existing law, the Department of Motor Vehicles will issue an exempt license plate to a publicly owned vehicle. In effect, and despite explicit law to the contrary, this has led some to question applicability of the toll exemption to privately owned ambulances. According to the author:

As a result, private ambulance companies face significant financial burdens due to toll costs, despite performing the same life-saving services as public ambulance providers. AB 2372 will bring much-needed financial equity to an industry already facing significant economic challenges by ensuring that private ambulance providers qualify for the same toll exemptions.

Not surprisingly, the bill is supported by several private ambulance operators. It is also supported by the California Association of Highway Patrolmen. There is no opposition registered against this bill.

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