
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Dave Cortese, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 2679	Hearing Date:	6/30/2026
Author:	Hadwick		
Version:	6/10/2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Samuel Myers, Isabelle LaSalle		

SUBJECT: State highways: public parking: traffic control

DIGEST: This bill authorizes the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to contract with local entities in the Tahoe corridor to prevent unsafe parking and enhance public access in the region.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Grants consent to the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact between the States of California and Nevada. (US Public Law 91-148, 1969)

Existing state law:

- 1) Establishes the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact between the States of California and Nevada for the management of the Lake Tahoe region. (GOV 66800, 66801)
- 2) Establishes the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), governed by a 15-member Board with representatives from the States of California and Nevada and the federal government, and empowers it to adopt all necessary ordinances, rules, and regulations to carry out its duties. (GOV 66801)
- 3) Establishes the Tahoe Transportation District (TTD) as a special purpose district coterminous with TRPA, governed by a 12-member board of directors with representatives from local governments and the States of California and Nevada. (GOV 66801)
- 4) Authorizes TTD to, among other things: (GOV 66801)
 - a) Own and operate a public transportation system;

- b) Own and operate support facilities for transportation systems, including parking lots and revenue collection devices; and,
 - c) Contract with private companies and local governments to operate transportation facilities or services.
- 5) Creates regional transportation planning agencies (RTPA) in designated areas throughout the state and requires them to prepare and adopt a regional transportation plan (RTP), in coordination with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) directed at achieving a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system. (GOV 14527; SHC 65082)
- 6) Vests the full possession and control of all state highways and all property and rights in property acquired for state highway purposes to Caltrans. (SHC 90)
- 7) Tasks Caltrans with improving and maintaining the state highways. (SHC 91)
- 8) Grants California Highway Patrol (CHP) the full responsibility and primary jurisdiction for the administration and enforcement of the laws, and for the investigation of traffic accidents, on all toll highways and state highways constructed as freeways, including transit-related facilities located on or along the rights-of-way of those toll highways or freeways. (VEH 2400)

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes Caltrans to contract with a state agency, local government with jurisdiction in the region, or TTD to:
- a) Prevent unsafe parking and pedestrian movement on the state highway; and,
 - b) Enhance public access to the Tahoe corridor and public recreation sites.
- 2) As part of such a contract, authorizes the following:
- a) The placement of traffic control devices;
 - b) Implementing traffic calming measures;
 - c) Restricting parking on the shoulder of a state highway;
 - d) Developing public parking on state-owned land;

- e) Establishing and collecting public parking fees; and,
 - f) Developing transit facilities and pedestrian pathways to connect public parking and recreation sites.
- 3) Permits the contract to authorize state agency, local government, or TTD employees to issue citations with the same force and effect as citations issued by a peace officer, subject to the following restrictions:
- a) The citation is issued within areas where there is access to a recreation destination; and,
 - b) The agency, government, or TTD has established minimum qualifications and provided training and equipment to the employee.
- 4) Creates the Tahoe Safe Recreation Access Fund (TSRAF), funded by moneys collected pursuant to this bill. These funds are continuously appropriated to Caltrans for the following purposes, in the Tahoe corridor:
- a) The operation and maintenance of public parking, public transit, and pedestrian pathways;
 - b) The installation of signage to support safety and provided information to people using public parking; and,
 - c) The development, operation, and maintenance of amenities for people using public parking.
- 5) Creates the Tahoe Safe Recreation Access Penalty Account, in the TSRAF, funded by penalty moneys collected pursuant to this bill. These funds are continuously appropriated to Caltrans for parking enforcement in the Tahoe corridor.
- 6) Defines the Tahoe corridor as the portions of State Routes (SR) 28, 50, and 89 within Lake Tahoe and the adjacent parts of the Counties of El Dorado and Placer lying within the Tahoe Basin.
- 7) Defines public parking as a parking space or parking facility, including, but not limited to, a parking deck, parking garage, parking structure, or paved or unpaved parking lot, that members of the public are invited or permitted to enter and use.

- 8) Defines traffic calming as a combination of measures and techniques intended to:
 - a) Reduce vehicle speeds;
 - b) Promote safe and pleasant conditions for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and residents;
 - c) Improve the environment and usability of roadways; or,
 - d) Improve real and perceived safety for nonmotorized traffic.
- 9) Specifies that traffic calming does not include reducing the number of vehicle lanes in the Tahoe corridor.
- 10) Makes findings and declarations related to parking management and recreation access in high-use corridors within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, “Lake Tahoe is a national and international resource of unique ecological, recreational, and economic importance. Tahoe’s natural beauty supports a regional economy exceeding 5 billion dollars annually and provides outdoor recreation for millions of Californians and visitors each year. Growing visitation at Lake Tahoe, especially near Emerald Bay, has led to dangerous conditions for hikers, visitors and residents. Assembly Bill 2679 creates a framework to improve safety along highways in the Tahoe Basin and promote the public’s access to Lake Tahoe.”
- 2) *Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Tahoe Transit District.* Lake Tahoe, straddling the boarder of California and Nevada, is one of the largest lakes in the United States. The region is home to a large tourism industry, drawing roughly 2 million visitors annually for hiking, skiing, water sports, and other natural attractions. In the 1960’s, as the region was increasing in popularity, it became clear that there was a need for a robust governance structure to deal with the growing communities, increased transportation needs, and new environmental challenges. To address these problems, in 1969 California and Nevada agreed to, and Congress approved, a bistate compact to establish two new intergovernmental entities.

The first of these was TRPA, established with the mission to “to lead the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and

human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region, while improving local communities, and people's interactions with our irreplaceable environment." TRPA is governed by a 15-member board, comprised of seven members each from California and Nevada, and one member appointed by the President of the United States. The agency issues permits, institutes policies, creates plans, and administers projects relating to the joint management of the region in areas such as environmental protection, housing, and transportation. Additionally, TRPA serves as the region's federally-designated MPO and state-designated RTPA.

The second entity created by the bistate compact is TTD. Although TRPA coordinates transportation efforts across the region, TTD is the entity designated to run public transportation systems and manage parking facilities in the area. Currently, TTD operates seven fixed-service bus routes in the region, largely on the Nevada side of the lake. TTD also contracts with private companies to operate the Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit (TART) and Lake Link on-demand microtransit services on the north and south side of the lake respectively. Beyond these transit projects, TTD also operates parking lots and works on active transportation projects such as bike trails and pathways.

Both TRPA and TTD are highly intergovernmental entities, working closely with the federal government, the states of California and Nevada, the cities and counties in the regions, special district entities such as air management boards, and other state-level entities like the respective state parks services or departments of transportation. Furthermore, TRPA and TTD are highly coordinated with each other, often working hand-in-hand on transportation issues in the region.

- 3) *Traffic safety around Lake Tahoe.* Lake Tahoe is completely enclosed by a system of state highways. On the California side this is comprised of SR 28 in the north, SR 50 in the south, and SR 89 along the western shore. In Nevada, there is Nevada SR 28 in the north and US 50 in the south. These routes serve as the primary points of access to the lake itself, the surrounding mountains, and the many tourist attractions in the area, including numerous California state parks. However, these roads were originally designed to accommodate constant vehicle flow and through traffic, not recreational access. As these roads are increasingly used by tourists looking to access local attractions, this has created problems related to parking, traffic, and pedestrian safety.

Most notably, many people park illegally along the side of the state highways. Since many of these highways are narrow, with very little shoulder room, this creates safety hazards for vehicles and pedestrians. Parked vehicles often cross the fog lines, jutting out into active traffic, causing vehicles to have to divert

into oncoming traffic. Pedestrians parking in these areas must walk along a busy highway to reach their ultimate destination, often crossing at unofficial crossings. For example, according to TRPA, a safety review conducted in the summer of 2025 utilizing a mobile traffic camera recorded 759 wrong-way drivers and 20,500 illegal pedestrian crossings over a 40-day period. These safety issues are exacerbated by the geography of the area, which often features tight switchbacks, rockfall hazards, and blind corners.

To further quantify these dangers, in 2025 Caltrans conducted a formal road safety audit of a portion of this corridor around Emerald Bay on the southwest side of the lake. Specifically, the audit focused on a 5.5 mile stretch of SR 89 surrounding Emerald Bay. This is one of the more popular areas in the region, serving tourists seeking a view of Emerald Bay, going to Vikingsholm Castle, trying to access the beach, or going to Desolation Wilderness National Forest. As such, the area is marked by high volumes of vehicles, illegal parking, and roadside pedestrian travel, especially during the summer peak periods.

The Caltrans road safety audit found that over the past 10 years, there have been a total of 128 crashes in the Emerald Bay area, of which 26% involved injuries, although none were fatal. Although these numbers are relatively low, especially compared to busier highways across the state, the report found that the area overall was “characterized by opportunistic parking with many visitors parking on limited shoulder space along SR 89, despite signed rockfall hazard areas and no parking signs...Pedestrians and bicyclists typically cycle or walk along the narrow shoulders or in the travel lanes, increasing potential safety conflicts with vehicles.”

- 4) *Solutions on the Nevada side.* Although the Caltrans audit was focused on a relatively small portion of the corridor on the California side of Lake Tahoe, residents have long reported similar issues throughout the corridor. To address these issues, in 2025 the Nevada Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, SB 426. This bill designated the Lake Tahoe Basin Scenic Byway Corridor Recreation Safety Zone along the highways on the Nevada side of the lake. The primary purpose of the bill was to authorize the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and other local law enforcement agencies to tackle the issue of illegal roadside parking.

Specifically, SB 426 authorized local law enforcement agencies to more strictly enforce prohibitions on parking on state highways, and allowed TTD to enter into agreements with local agencies to create new public parking on state-owned land. TTD was further authorized to contract with local agencies to collect fees for this parking and to enforce parking provisions in these new lots.

Funds generated from these fees must then be re-invested in the region for further traffic safety measures.

The bill passed both chambers of the Nevada Legislature unanimously and took effect in October of 2025. Since then, new efforts have been undertaken along a stretch of SR 28 between Sand Harbor and Carson City. These efforts have included installing additional no parking and restricted parking signs, installing new crosswalks, and expanding two parking lots in the area from 30 spots to roughly 120 spots. Since these changes have been made, traffic citations have increased by 30% and crashes have decreased by 24%, according to the Nevada Highway Patrol.¹

- 5) *Emerald Bay Shuttle Pilot*. In 2025, TRPA and TTD launched a pilot program aimed at addressing the parking and safety issues around the Emerald Bay. This pilot focused on the same area as the Caltrans road safety audit and was divided into two strategies. The first approach centered on erecting new signs and physical, temporary barriers to prevent motorists from parking on the side of the state highway. Fifty unofficial roadside parking spots were removed in this way. The goal was to then shift visitors from these unofficial locations to one of the four permanent parking lots in the area.

The second piece of the pilot involved setting up a new shuttle service to take people from various locations in the area to the Eagle Falls trailhead, one of the most popular tourist destinations along the Emerald Bay. The shuttle operated during peak visitor season, from July through September. Three routes were operated overall: one from Sugar Pine Point Campground, one from Camp Richardson, and from the South Lake Tahoe Y Transit Center. The first two routes were run seven days a week and the last route was run on weekends, with shuttles arriving roughly every thirty minutes to an hour for all routes. The shuttle service was operated by the same company TTD contracts with to operate Lake Link and TART microtransit services.

The effectiveness of the pilot was evaluated through a combination of site visits, parking counts throughout the area, an evaluation of shuttle reservation and ridership data, and a survey of shuttle passengers. In general, the pilot proved to be successful at reducing illegal parking and encouraging the use of safer transportation options to move around the area. Specifically, nearly 5,000 riders utilized the shuttles during the season, averaging 85 riders a day. Based on these numbers, it is estimated that over 1,700 vehicle trips were eliminated, reducing the number of parked vehicles in the area by nearly 900. The shuttle also proved popular with riders, as 94% of the 83 riders surveyed

¹ <https://www.sierrasun.com/news/no-parking-signs-along-east-tahoe-corridor-spark-access-questions/>

said they would use it again, and 99% said they would recommend others use it. However, the service was largely subsidized, with farebox recovery only accounting for about 7% of the shuttle's \$320,000 operating budget.

- 6) *AB 2679 seeks to build on these examples.* AB 2679 is modeled after Nevada's SB 426 with the goal of instituting a similar program on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Region. Namely, TRPA and TTD want to expand the Emerald Bay Shuttle program and continue efforts to reduce illegal roadside parking in the Emerald Bay area. AB 2679 seeks to achieve this by authorizing Caltrans to enter into agreements with local government agencies like TRPA and TTD to construct new parking lots in the area and install additional temporary barriers and signage to discourage roadside parking. Revenues generated from these parking lots would then be invested in additional traffic safety improvements in the area, in cooperation with local agencies. This could include expanded transit service, such as the Emerald Bay shuttle or the construction of dedicated bike lanes, trails, or other pedestrian friendly pathways. Notably, many of these investments were recommended by the 2025 Caltrans road safety audit.

Writing as the bill's sponsor, TRPA states, "The Safe Tahoe Travel Act of 2026 will improve public access and create a safer and more environmentally sustainable experience for all. The bill would create a framework to designate safety zones along Tahoe's highway corridors where additional traffic calming, parking management, and public access tools are needed. This includes preventing unsafe parking and pedestrian movement on state highways and developing public parking, transit stops, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the state right-of-way."

AB 2679 gives Caltrans permissive contracting authority but does not lay out details for how these agreements between Caltrans and the local governments are to be structured. While this gives latitude to all parties to negotiate the terms of these agreements, it leaves several questions unanswered. First, and most fundamentally, is it appropriate to delegate the state's authority on the state highway system to local jurisdictions? Caltrans and CHP currently manage many of the operations AB 2679 seeks to delegate. It is unclear whether this bill strikes the right balance between streamlining inflexible state processes and handing over state authority and assets. For example, if local governments intend to utilize state land to build new parking lots and charge for parking, to what extent should the state be reimbursed for this usage? Additionally, while delays in Caltrans's issuance of encroachment permits for roadside safety work may frustrate local jurisdictions, Caltrans may be working through legitimate safety considerations. The committee may wish to consider whether additional statutory guardrails are warranted to ensure that any delegation of authority

appropriately balances local flexibility with the state's responsibility to manage the state highway system.

7) *Double referral.* This bill had been double referred to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: Yes Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, June 24, 2026.)

SUPPORT:

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (Sponsor)
California Tahoe Alliance
County of El Dorado
League to Save Lake Tahoe

OPPOSITION:

None received

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