

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 431 (Wilson)

As Amended May 27, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to include advanced air mobility (AAM) in the next update to the California Transportation Plan prepared after January 1, 2027 and requires Caltrans to establish a statewide working group to explore California's role as a leader in the development and implementation of advanced air mobility.

Senate Amendments

1) Delete requirements that Caltrans:

- a. Include AAM infrastructure issues in the statewide aviation plan;
- b. Designate an AAM subject matter expert as a resource for local and regional jurisdictions.
- c. Lead a statewide education campaign for local and regional decisionmakers on the benefits of electric powered-lift aircraft.
- d. Provide local and regional jurisdictions with guidance, including best practices, and technical resources to support uniform planning and zoning.

2) Delete legislative findings and declarations.

3) Requires Caltrans, in coordination with the California State Transportation Agency, to include AAM in the next update to the California Transportation Plan prepared after January 1, 2027.

4) Requires Caltrans, in coordination with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), the Energy Commission (CEC), the State Air Resources Board (CARB), the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GOBiz), and the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), to establish a statewide working group to facilitate ongoing collaboration among state agencies, local offices of emergency management, and industry stakeholders to explore California's role as a leader in the development and implementation of advanced air mobility, supporting technology, and economic development, including job creation.

COMMENTS

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) defines AAM as a transportation system that transports people and property by air between two points using aircraft with advanced technologies, including electric aircraft or eVTOL aircraft, in both controlled and uncontrolled airspace. A new generation of eVTOL aircraft has the potential to enhance urban and regional aviation with a smaller carbon footprint. Manufacturers, technology companies, and transportation providers envision the use of cleaner, quieter electric aircraft to provide cost-effective intra-city, inter-city, and regional air travel in the nation's most congested areas. In fact,

different prototype electric aircraft are already under development around the world, and some have begun test flights.

Current AAM efforts. Many companies developing AAM technology are based in California (e.g. Archer Aviation, Joby, Wisk, Overair, Kittyhawk). In a 2023 report, California State University Long Beach found that a six vertiport network in the Los Angeles-Orange County region could generate 2,133 jobs during construction and 943 jobs annually once operational. The study projects the vertiport network would annually generate \$173.3 million in expenditures and deliver \$90.3 million in labor income.

The report notes that Pyka, an autonomous electric aircraft manufacturer based in Alameda, plans to invest more than \$9 million to expand operations, creating over 130 new jobs, and Joby, an electric aircraft manufacturer, plans to invest more than \$40 million to expand operations in Santa Cruz and Marina, creating over 700 new jobs. Governor Newsom highlighted both companies in his February 2025 economic blueprint. Other states, like Utah, Arkansas, Michigan, Texas and Ohio have begun to update their regulatory framework to accommodate AAM.

Federal initiatives span high-level strategic roadmaps, targeted testing programs, infrastructure funding, and legislative modernizations. In December 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation released an *Advanced Air Mobility National Strategy*, a whole-of-government framework outlining how the U.S. plans to integrate AAM aircraft, including eVTOL and other powered-lift vehicles, into the national transportation system over the next decade. Other countries, including Canada and Japan, as well as the European Union, are similarly focused.

Caltrans' Aeronautics Division. This division within Caltrans oversees a diverse suite of airport-related issues, including airport noise, heliport permits, land use planning, maps and resources, and hospital heliports, and AAM.

It also publishes the California Aviation System Plan (CASP), which aims to preserve, enhance, and guide the development of the state's aviation infrastructure. It ensures airports operate safely, remain connected to the multimodal network, and foster sustainable economic growth. Though several years old, CASP 2020 recognizes AAM and notes that aircraft manufacturers envision the use of electric aircraft to provide cost-effective intra-city, inter-city, and regional air travel in the nation's most congested areas including Los Angeles and San Francisco. It finds that financial and business opportunities exist, but there are significant technological, operational, and regulatory challenges including those involving public perception and acceptance. Several manufacturers of eVTOL vehicles have developed prototype aircraft to transport passengers within and between large metropolitan areas but none have achieved full FAA certification to offer commercial service.

The CASP 2020 report finds that "despite the strides made by aircraft manufactures to develop viable aircraft, (AAM) challenges remain as neither the physical infrastructure (e.g., takeoff and landing infrastructure, power infrastructure, etc.) nor the regulatory and policy framework have been developed to address UAM operation in urban areas."

CA Transportation Plan. While there is no shortage of capital, commercial interest and R&D efforts in the state, our regulatory framework currently lags more aggressive states like Texas, Florida, and Utah. SB 800 (Caballero), Chapter 416, Statutes of 2023, required Caltrans to establish the Advanced Air Mobility, Zero-Emission, and Electrification Aviation Advisory

Panel to assess the feasibility and readiness of existing infrastructure, the development of a three-year prioritized workplan, and pathways for promoting equitable access to AAM infrastructure. SB 800 required Caltrans to report to the Legislature by January 1, 2025; while it has not yet done so, Caltrans released draft report last December. Some of its key findings include:

- 1) California's existing airport system can support early AAM operations—nearly all public-use airports can theoretically handle STOL (short take-off and landing) and VTOL (vertical) aircraft, and any airport with a 3,000-foot runway can handle CTOL (conventional) aircraft. But existing facilities are often limited by location, size, energy capacity, airspace access, and hangar space.
- 2) General aviation (GA) airports are already functioning as AAM hubs — companies such as Joby, Archer, and Wisk already use them for R&D, manufacturing, and testing. But the 191 GA airports get only a small fraction of the federal funding commercial airports receive, a significant constraint.
- 3) Energy infrastructure is a major bottleneck: eVTOL charging will likely stress the state's power grid; coordination with the California Energy Commission is critical.
- 4) Regarding a three-year a workplan, some of the recommendations include:
 - a) Updating the State Aeronautics Act;
 - b) Secure funding for airports and AAM deployment;
 - c) Identify energy and infrastructure needs, and provide land use/environmental permitting guidance;
 - Include AAM in the California Transportation Plan.

This bill addresses one of the above draft recommendations by requiring Caltrans include advanced air mobility in the next update to the California Transportation Plan (CTP), a statutorily required document which "outlines a vision for the future transportation system, establishes statewide priorities, and acts as a roadmap for Caltrans and its partner agencies to implement [its] recommendations."

Caltrans is required to update the CTP every five years, and the next update is anticipated this year; thus, AAM would not be included until the next update due in 2031. As a high-level strategic plan, the CTP often lacks the granular technical guidance needed to build physical assets like vertiports.

However, given its multimodal focus, including AAM in the CTP could help to ensure it is planned in an integrated way alongside highways, high-speed rail, and urban mass transit. It also better aligns AAM with the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals and equity priorities. Finally, inclusion in the CTP could better position AAM to compete for broad, intermodal infrastructure funds rather than small aviation grants.

According to the Author

"Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is a new and innovative mode of transportation that will modernize the future of mobility for passengers and cargo by relying on underutilized aerial

transit routes. Referred to by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a "new era of aviation," AAM utilizes a new type of aircraft known as electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL). eVTOL aircraft have a variety of applications including the transport of people, cargo, and medical services. While AAM represents a step toward the future there currently are no guiding principles on the implementation or rollout of AAM across California. AB 431 aims to establish those guiding principles setting California up for success in the future."

Arguments in Support

California Chapter of Association of Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) writes, "AB 431 (Wilson) builds off SB 800 (Caballero, 2023) and establishes the groundwork for the successful introduction of AAM technology into California. Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is a new and innovative mode of transportation that will modernize the future of mobility for passengers and cargo by relying on underutilized aerial transit routes."

Joby Aviation writes, "Currently, there is no set of clear, comprehensive, and concrete steps for the deployment and scaling of AAM in California. Although the FAA has the overarching authority over all airspace in the U.S., the California state government will have a key role in providing guidance to local municipalities, raising public awareness, and integrating necessary infrastructure."

Arguments in Opposition

Writing in opposition, the City of Newport Beach is concerned that this bill could be interpreted to preempt local regulation, including zoning requirements, of AAM projects, and requests clarifying amendments in this regard.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Caltrans estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$215,000 annually for 1.0 PY of staff workload to meet the requirements of this bill, including establishing an expanded statewide working group, collaborating with and facilitating communication among participating entities, researching ongoing developments in the evolving AAM sector, and developing expanded AAM information for inclusion in the CTP. (Aeronautics Account)
- 2) Staff estimates that CalSTA, CEC, CARB, GO-Biz, and LCI would each incur minor to moderate ongoing costs to participate in activities related to the statewide working group. For example, LCI reports ongoing annual costs of approximately \$61,500 (General Fund) for a partial PY of staff time to support the work needed to participate in the statewide working group. Staff assumes a similar level of workload for each of the other participating entities, resulting in total costs in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars in the aggregate. (General Fund, various special funds)

VOTES:

ASM TRANSPORTATION: 15-0-1

YES: Wilson, Davies, Ahrens, Carrillo, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Lackey, Lowenthal, Macedo, Papan, Ransom, Rogers, Ward

ABS, ABST OR NV: Aguiar-Curry

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

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CONSULTANT: Dan Chia / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093

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