

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
SB 1008 (Ochoa Bogh) – As Introduced February 9, 2026

Policy Committee:	Natural Resources	Vote:	13 - 0
	Utilities and Energy		18 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill reenacts an exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the closure of a railroad grade crossing ordered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) upon a finding by the CPUC that the crossing presents a threat to public safety.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Exempts from CEQA the closure of a railroad grade crossing by order of the CPUC if the CPUC finds the crossing to present a threat to public safety.
- 2) Provides that the exemption does not apply to any crossing for high-speed rail or any crossing for a project carried out by the High-Speed Rail Authority or a successor agency, as specified.
- 3) Requires the lead agency to file the notice of exemption with the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) and with the county clerk in each county in which the project will be located, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Negligible state costs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Senate Bill 1008...is a non-controversial measure that restores a longstanding policy to ensure timely action on rail safety...Without this exemption, the PUC must complete a CEQA review before closing an unsafe at-grade rail crossing, potentially delaying critical safety improvements and leaving communities exposed to preventable risks. SB 1008 simply reinstates the prior exemption, allowing the PUC to continue exercising its authority to alter or abolish dangerous crossings in a timely manner to protect public safety.

- 2) **Background.** CEQA provides a process for evaluating the environmental effects of applicable projects undertaken or approved by public agencies. If a project is not exempt from CEQA, the lead agency prepares an initial study to determine whether the project may

have a significant effect on the environment. If the initial study shows the project would not have a significant effect on the environment, the lead agency must prepare a negative declaration. If the initial study shows that project may have a significant effect, the lead agency must prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

Existing law grants the CPUC exclusive authority to alter, relocate, or abolish rail crossings when necessary to protect public safety. Prior law exempted certain CPUC-ordered rail crossing closures from review under CEQA, allowing the commission to act more quickly when it determines that a crossing poses a safety risk. That exemption expired on January 1, 2025. This bill restores the exemption.

Writing in support, Union Pacific Railroad, BNSF Railway Company, and 25 short-line railroads note that, according to Federal Railroad Association data, there are over 8,500 grade crossings in the state. The coalition writes:

SB 1008 continues a vital CEQA exemption that streamlines critical safety initiatives and supports the Commission in reaching its railroad goals and complying with federal regulations. Originally passed in AB 1665 (Galgiani) from 2012, this exemption was then later reauthorized in 2019 under AB 1824 with a sunset date of January 1, 2025 ensuring that this common sense exemption remained in practice.

Nothing is more important to the freight railroads in California than the safety of its employees, customers, and communities. We believe the safest crossing is no crossing, and we have an ongoing goal of reducing the overall number of crossings to improve safety for pedestrians, motorists, customers and communities.

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