

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1250
Author: Cortese (D), et al.
Amended: 5/14/26
Vote: 21

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/7/26
AYES: Cortese, Strickland, Archuleta, Arreguín, Blakespear, Gonzalez, Grayson, Richardson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle, Menjivar, Seyarto, Valladares

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/21/26
AYES: Becker, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern
NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto, Allen

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto

SUBJECT: State highway system: wildlife connectivity

SOURCE: The Nature Conservancy

DIGEST: This bill requires the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to include wildlife connectivity assets in the Department's asset management plan and further requires Caltrans to develop a comprehensive approach to address wildlife connectivity needs on the state highway system, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes a duty for Caltrans to plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain the state's transportation systems, as specified.

- 2) Requires Caltrans, in consultation with the California Transportation Commission (CTC), to prepare a robust asset management plan to guide the selection of projects for the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP).
- 3) Requires CTC, in connection with the asset management plan, to adopt targets and performance measures reflecting the state's transportation goals and objectives.
- 4) Declares the intent of the Legislature that Caltrans review the full extent of the state highway system, as currently maintained, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and with opportunities for the public to provide data input for consideration, to develop a comprehensive approach to address wildlife connectivity needs throughout the state with the goal of implementing measures that protect, conserve, and improve the state's unique wildlife, landscapes, and natural resources.
- 5) Requires Caltrans, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and other appropriate agencies, to establish an inventory of connectivity needs on the state highway system where the implementation of wildlife passage features could reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions or enhance wildlife connectivity, and to update the inventory on a biennial basis, as specified.

This bill:

- 1) With respects to the California Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) – requires CTC to include target and performance measure goals and objectives for wildlife connectivity assets that improve or maintain the connectivity of wildlife crossings on the state highway system and further requires Caltrans to include wildlife connectivity assets in the plan, as specified.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), to evaluate the state highway system and develop a comprehensive approach to address wildlife connectivity needs throughout the state, as specified.
- 3) Requires Caltrans and DFW to jointly establish an inventory of wildlife connectivity needs on the state highway system, as specified.

- 4) Requires Caltrans and DFW to jointly develop and publish on Caltrans' website the inventory of wildlife connectivity needs and further requires both departments to jointly update the inventory biennially, as specified.
- 5) Further requires Caltrans to develop and publish on its website a list of funded transportation projects with wildlife passage features that address wildlife connectivity needs and additionally requires Caltrans to update the project list biennially, as specified.
- 6) Makes several technical, non-substantial changes.

Comments

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, "California's highways connect our communities and carry millions of drivers safely to work, school, and home every day. But too often, those same roadways become places where drivers encounter animals in the roadway with little warning, creating dangerous situations that can lead to serious crashes, injuries, and costly damage. We know these collisions are preventable. At the same time, roadway barriers severely restrict animal movement—most notably in Southern California mountain lion populations, where freeway isolation has produced some of the lowest genetic diversity recorded for the species and increased the likelihood that species like mountain lions appear on roads or in neighborhoods as they attempt to find mates or territory. Wildlife crossings and related infrastructure have been shown to dramatically reduce collisions between vehicles and animals, yet too often these solutions are treated as stand-alone projects rather than incorporated into routine highway planning. SB 1250 makes clear that improving roadway safety means planning ahead by using the same data, engineering, and investment strategies we apply to other highway risks to identify collision hotspots and address them as part of how we build and maintain California's transportation system."
- 2) *California's Transportation System.* California's transportation system is one of the nation's most robust and multifaceted networks. For example, the state's extensive network of public roads is approximately 175,600 lane miles; of that total, the state highway system comprising roughly 50,000 lane miles. The total number of bridges is approximately 26,000 and the state's highway / freeway system encompasses 12 primary interstate highways and over 200 State Routes. Additionally, within the state, transit agencies provide imperative public transportation for residents throughout California; intercity and commuter rail

agencies connect riders to major metropolitan destinations and various regions. Lastly, extensive bike networks provide both residents and cyclists the opportunity to travel by alternative means beyond a motor vehicle.

- 3) *What are wildlife passage features?* Streets and Highways Code defines “wildlife passage features” to mean “culverts, underpasses, overpasses, bridges, directional fencing, barrier breaks, wildlife monitoring devices or detection systems, elevated highway segments, or other features, supported by a functional or potentially functional ecological buffer of habitat on multiple approaches to a highway that encourage use of the feature and are designed to be managed or restored using the best available science to improve the ability of wildlife to safely traverse transportation infrastructure.” Several examples of these passage features include the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing in Los Angeles County expected to be completed later this year, and another example is a number of wildlife underpasses along major corridors on Interstate 5 paired with continuous fencing to guide wildlife toward safe crossings.
- 4) *What is the TAMP?* The TAMP is a strategic and systematic process aimed at operating, maintaining, upgrading, and expanding physical transportation assets effectively throughout their life cycle. The TAMP focuses on resource allocation and utilization to improve decision-making based on quality information and well-defined objectives. The TAMP is a coordinated plan by Caltrans and its partner agencies to maintain California's transportation infrastructure assets today and into the future. It is required to be updated every four years to incorporate improvements and re-evaluate conditions, targets, and performance. The TAMP combines these strategies into a constrained 10-year financial plan for projects and identifies the performance gap to achieve the 10-year targets that will improve the transportation system. Ultimately, the TAMP serves as the guide for the selection of projects for the SHOPP.

Recently, on top of identifying and evaluating transportation infrastructure assets, legislation was passed to require complete street assets (e.g. pedestrian and bicycle assets) to also be included in the TAMP. The provisions specified in this bill add to existing requirements by additionally requiring wildlife connectivity assets be included into the TAMP and similarly, requires CTC to develop additional targets and performance measures for new and existing wildlife connectivity assets. As the SHOPP's core program objective is to fund major rehabilitation projects on the transportation system, the recently adopted 2026 SHOPP program has identified a net decline in funding from the 2024

SHOPP resulting in delaying a number of programmed projects and adjusting a number of carry over projects. Furthermore, increasing project costs (e.g. construction materials) and repairs associated with extreme weather events have also negatively impacted the SHOPP's fiscal condition in recent years. As a result, if enacted, it is unclear how the inclusion of wildlife connectivity assets into the TAMP and the development of performance standards for these newly incorporated assets will impact the SHOPP's overall fiscal condition.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown significant transportation fund cost pressures, to the extent that including wildlife connectivity assets in the TAMP results in the inclusion of connectivity projects in the SHOPP, or the addition of these features to other maintenance projects. This would result in cost pressures to provide more funding for SHOPP projects or reduce the number of projects that are funded. Staff notes that there has been a decline in available funding for SHOPP projects in recent years. See Staff Comments. (State Highway Account, Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account, federal funds).
- DFW indicates that any new workload by requiring DFW to jointly develop and publish the inventory of connectivity needs, rather than work in a consultation role, would be absorbable. (Fish and Game Preservation Fund)
- CTC indicates that any costs could be absorbed with existing resources. Specifically, any workload related to the adoption of targets and performance measures for wildlife connectivity in the TAMP could be addressed in the regular cycle of TAMP updates. (State Highway Account, Public Transportation Account)

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

The Nature Conservancy (Source)
350 Bay Area Action
350 Sacramento
Active San Gabriel Valley
Alameda County Resource Conservation District
All Hands Ecology
Alta Peak Chapter, California Native Plant Society
American River Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Arc Solutions
Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy
Better World Group
Bolsa Chica Land Trust
Cactustocloud Institute
California Council of Land Trusts
California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition
California Native Plant Society
Calwild
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Central Valley Partnership
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Cleaneearth4kids.org
Climate Action California
Climate Action California
Climateplan
Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation
Coastal Policy Solutions
Coastal Ranches Conservancy
Consejo De Federaciones Mexicanas
County of San Diego Third District Supervisor Terra Lawson-remer
County of Santa Clara
Defenders of Wildlife
El Dorado County Transportation Commission
Endangered Habitats League
Environment California
Epic (environmental Protection Information Center)
Escondido Neighbors United
Filoli
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of Rose Creek
Friends of the Dunes
Friends of the Inyo
Grassland Water District
Green Foothills
Greenbelt Alliance
Greenlatinos

Hills for Everyone
Humane World for Animals
In Defense of Animals
Laguna Greenbelt INC.
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
Los Padres Forestwatch
Marin Conservation League
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Morongo Basin Conservation Association
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
National Wildlife Federation
Nature Conservancy; the
Oswit Land Trust
Pathways for Wildlife
Paula Lane Action Network
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Pew Charitable Trusts; the
Planning and Conservation League
Plumas Audubon Society
Preserve Calavera
Prosperity Action
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Resource Renewal Institute
Riverside County Supervisor Chuck Washington, Third District
Road Ecology Center, UC Davis
San Diego Bird Alliance
San Diego Humane Society - Project Wildlife
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Sandiego350
Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
Save Mount Diablo
Sc Wildlands
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Shasta Land Trust
Sierra Club California
Sierra Consortium

Sierra Nevada Alliance
Siskiyou Land Trust
Social Compassion in Legislation
Sonoma Ecology Center
Sonoma Land Trust
South Yuba River Citizens League
Streets for All
Sugar Pine Foundation
Temecula-elsinore-anza-murrieta Resource Conservation District
The Climate Center
The Volgenau Foundation
The Wilderness Society
Treepeople
Trust for Public Land; the
Ventura Land Trust
Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority
Wildcoast
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Conservation Network
Zerow.org

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

None received

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