
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 1250
Author: Cortese (D), et al.
Amended: 8/19/26
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

SENATE FLOOR: 37-0, 5/19/26

AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Jones, Niello, Valladares

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: Passed, 8/24/26

SUBJECT: State highway system: wildlife connectivity

SOURCE: The Nature Conservancy

DIGEST: This bill requires the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to publish a supplemental list of wildlife connectivity improvements to the state

highway system (SHS), as specified. Further requires Caltrans, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to develop a comprehensive approach to address wildlife connectivity needs on the SHS.

Assembly Amendments require Caltrans to work in consultation with CDFW and provide opportunities for public input, as specified, when developing a comprehensive approach to addressing wildlife connectivity needs, requires Caltrans to include wildlife connectivity as an objective in the State Highway System Management Plan (SHSMP), and requires Caltrans to submit the supplemental list of wildlife connectivity improvements to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) for review and comments prior to the final list being published by Caltrans.

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 CTC, to prepare a robust asset management plan to guide the selection of projects for the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP).
- 3) Declares the intent of the Legislature that Caltrans review the full extent of the state highway system, as currently maintained, in consultation with CDFW 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.
- 4) Requires Caltrans, in consultation with CDFW 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) Defines "wildlife connectivity improvements" as a physical infrastructure improvement on or within the right-of-way of transportation infrastructure that

facilitates wildlife passage across transportation infrastructure and reduces wildlife-vehicle collisions, while improving safety and operations for all users.

- 2) Requires Caltrans to publish a supplement list of wildlife connectivity improvements, informed by the California Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and identified for implementation on the SHS, including those completed on or after January 1, 2023, that address or enhance wildlife connectivity needs pursuant to existing law.
- 3) Requires CTC to review and comment on the supplemental list after which Caltrans is required to publish it on its internet website.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to review the full extent of the state highway system, in consultation with CDFW, to develop a comprehensive approach to address wildlife connectivity needs throughout the state.
- 5) As part of existing statutory requirements to inventory wildlife connectivity needs on the SHS, requires Caltrans to update the inventory based on analysis of transportation assets within priority route segments identified by CDFW, as specified.
- 6) Requires Caltrans to include wildlife connectivity as an objective in the SHSMP, as specified.

Comments

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."

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.

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.

The provisions specified in this bill aim to build off previous legislative efforts / existing law to improve Caltrans' process when evaluating and prioritizing wildlife connectivity improvements on the State's transportation system.

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

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- Significant annual ongoing costs of an unknown, but substantial amount to Caltrans to develop a supplemental list of wildlife connectivity improvements on the state highway system every four years. (State Highway Account).

- All work required by this bill is consistent with and can be incorporated into work DFW must do pursuant to prior enacted legislation (AB 2344 (Friedman), Chapter 964, Statutes of 2022) that requires Caltrans, in consultation with DFW and other appropriate agencies, to take actions to address wildlife connectivity needs related to the state highway system.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/24/26)

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 Environmental Voters

California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition

California Native Plant Society

California Native Plant Society, Alta Peak Chapter

California Native Plant Society, Mojave Desert Chapter

California Waterfowl Association

Calwild

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Environmental Health

Central Valley Partnership

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife

Cleanearth4kids.org

Climate Action California

Climate Action California

Climateplan

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission

Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities

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
East Bay Regional Park District
El Dorado County Transportation Commission
Endangered Habitats League
Environment California
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 Forest Watch
Los Padres Forestwatch
Marin Conservation League
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Morongo Basin Conservation Association
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
National Wildlife Federation
Native American Environmental Protection Coalition
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 Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
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
Sea and Sage Audubon Society
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Shasta Land Trust
Sierra Club California
Sierra Consortium
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Siskiyou Land Trust
Social Compassion in Legislation
Solano Land Trust
Sonoma Ecology Center
Sonoma Land Trust
South Yuba River Citizens League
Streets for All
Sugar Pine Foundation
Sustainable Conservation
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 8/24/26)

None received

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8/24/26 17:22:12

**** **END** ****