

SENATE PRIVACY, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE
Senator Christopher Cabaldon, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

SB 1279 (Gonzalez)
Version: March 25, 2026
Hearing Date: April 13, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
CK

SUBJECT

City of Long Beach Pacific Coast Highway speed safety system pilot program

DIGEST

This bill establishes an automated traffic enforcement program for the stretch of the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) running through the City of Long Beach.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To this point, California has taken an incremental approach to phasing in automated enforcement of certain laws. In 1994, the Legislature authorized automated rail crossing enforcement systems, recognizing the potential fatal consequences of the relevant violations. Over the years that followed, California has passed laws authorizing red-light cameras, cameras on public transit vehicles and street sweeping vehicles, and automated enforcement of parking violations. A series of bills has authorized automated speed enforcement in various jurisdictions.

Automated enforcement can provide more thorough enforcement of certain laws and reduce the need for employees conducting such enforcement, a cost savings measure. However, with these benefits come concerns regarding privacy and equity. Furthering the reach of automated surveillance should arguably be gradual, thoughtful, and done with an understanding of, and countermeasures to prevent, potential unintended consequences. Such enforcement gathers a vast amount of data, may reduce the judicious enforcement of parking laws, and has the ability to create a perverse incentive for governments that stand to financially benefit from increased citations.

This bill authorizes automated speed enforcement systems to be deployed in the City of Long Beach along the PCH. The program closely mirrors those authorized in pilot programs across six cities in California and along the PCH in the City of Malibu. The program is authorized for up to 9 years until a sunset on January 1, 2036. The bill is sponsored by the City of Long Beach. It is supported by a coalition of advocacy

organizations and elected officials, including Streets for All. It is opposed by the National Motorist Association. The bill passed out of the Senate Transportation Committee on a 10 to 1 vote.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes a “basic speed law” that prohibits a person from driving a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent, having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of, the highway, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property. (Veh. Code § 22350.)
- 2) Authorizes the cities of Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, Long Beach, and Glendale to establish a five-year speed safety system pilot program. (Veh. Code § 22425.)
- 3) Authorizes the City of Malibu to establish a five-year speed safety system pilot program on the PCH. (Veh. Code § 22435.)
- 4) Authorizes the use of an automated enforcement system for enforcement of red light violations by a governmental agency, subject to specific requirements and limitations. (Veh. Code § 21455.5.)
- 5) Establishes the Active Transportation Program (ATP), a grant program administered by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to encourage increased use of active modes of transportation, such as walking and biking. (Sts. & High. Code § 2380.)
- 6) Authorizes the designation of “safety corridors” for up to one-fifth of a local jurisdiction’s streets with the highest number of injuries and fatalities, with a definition to be determined by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the next revision of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Authorizes jurisdictions to lower speed limits in safety corridors by 5 mph from the existing speed limit established by an engineering and traffic survey. (Veh. Code § 22358.7.)
- 7) Provides that a person is “indigent” for purposes of parking violations if the person meets specified income criteria or the person receives specified public benefits. (Veh. Code § 40220(c).)
- 8) Authorizes a public transit operator to install automated forward facing parking control devices on city-owned or district-owned public transit vehicles for the

purpose of video imaging parking violations occurring in transit-only traffic lanes and at transit stops. Existing law defines a “transit-only traffic lane” to mean any designated transit-only lane on which use is restricted to mass transit vehicles, or other designated vehicles, including taxis and vanpools, during posted times. (Veh. Code § 40240(a), (h).)

- 9) States that citations shall only be issued for violations captured during the posted hours of operation for a transit-only traffic lane. Existing law requires designated employees to review video image recordings for the purpose of determining whether a parking violation occurred in a transit-only traffic lane, and permits alleged violators to review the video image evidence of the alleged violation during normal business hours at no cost. (Veh. Code § 40240(a), (c), (d).)
- 10) Requires automated forward facing parking control devices to be angled and focused so as to capture video images of parking violations and not unnecessarily capture identifying images of other drivers, vehicles, and pedestrians. Existing law requires the devices to record the date and time of the violation at the same time video images are captured, and provides that video image records are confidential and shall not be used or accessed for any purposes not related to the enforcement of parking violations occurring in transit-only traffic lanes. (Veh. Code § 40240(a), (f).)

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the City of Long Beach to establish a program for speed enforcement that utilizes up to six speed safety systems, to be operated by the local department of transportation, on the Pacific Coast Highway.
- 2) Imposes specified requirements for the program, including enhanced signage to alert drivers of their speed, the speed limit, and the presence of photo enforcement, and the development of uniform guidelines on the screening and issuance of notices of violation and storage of confidential information.
- 3) Requires the City of Long Beach to administer a public information campaign which identifies the location of the cameras and the timeframe when they will be in use.
- 4) Provides that the program may only issue warning notices during the first 60 days of enforcement; additionally, a vehicle’s first violation for traveling 11 to 15 miles per hour over the speed limit shall be a warning notice.
- 5) Provides that photographic or administrative records made by the system shall be confidential. Public agencies shall use and allow access to these records only for the purposes authorized or to assess the impacts of the system. Data about

the number of violations issued is not an administrative record prohibited from disclosure hereby and is subject to disclosure under applicable law. Strict retention guidelines must be abided by.

- 6) Specifies the specific civil penalties which may be assessed. It establishes an appeal process for ticketed drivers. The City of Long Beach must offer a diversion program for indigent speed safety system violation recipients to perform community service or complete an educational program in lieu of paying the penalty for a speed system violation.
- 7) Requires the City of Long Beach to offer the ability for indigent speed safety system violation recipients to pay applicable fines and penalties over a period of time under a payment plan with monthly installments of no more than \$25 and shall limit the processing fee to participate in a payment plan to \$5 or less. Applicable fines and penalties must be reduced by 80 percent for indigent persons, and by 50 percent for individuals up to 250 percent above the federal poverty level.
- 8) Places limitations on what the revenue from the program can be used for.
- 9) Requires the City to report to the Legislature an evaluation of the speed safety system. This must include a racial and economic equity impact analysis, developed in collaboration with local racial justice and economic equity stakeholder groups. The analysis shall include the number of notices of violations issued to indigent individuals, the number of notices of violations issued to individuals of up to 250 percent above the poverty line, and the number of violations issued to each ZIP Code.
- 10) Sunsets the authorization on January 1, 2036.

COMMENTS

1. The history of automated enforcement

While some counties may have installed automated traffic enforcement systems at an earlier date, legislative authorization for automated enforcement procedures relating to traffic violations began in 1994 with SB 1802 (Rosenthal, Ch. 1216, Stats. 1994). That bill authorized the use of “automated rail crossing enforcement systems” to enforce prohibitions on drivers from passing around or under rail crossings while the gates are closed. (Veh. Code § 22451.) Those systems functioned by photographing the front license plate and the driver of vehicles who proceeded around closed rail crossing gates in violation of the Vehicle Code provisions. The drivers of photographed vehicles, in turn, received citations for their violations.

In 1995, the Legislature authorized a three-year trial for red light camera enforcement programs. (SB 833, Kopp, Ch. 922, Stats. 1995.) Using similar technology, that program used sensors connected to cameras to take photographs of the front license plate and driver upon entering an intersection on a red light. That program was permanently extended in 1998 by SB 1136 (Kopp, Ch. 54, Stats. 1998).

In 2007, the Legislature authorized a four-year pilot project where San Francisco was authorized to install video cameras on city-owned public transit vehicles for the purpose of video imaging parking violations occurring in transit-only traffic lanes. (AB 101, Ma, Ch. 377, Stats. 2007.) Three years later, the Legislature authorized a five-year statewide pilot project to allow local public agencies to use automated parking enforcement systems for street sweeping-related violations. (AB 2567, Bradford, Ch. 471, Stats. 2010.) In 2011, the Legislature extended San Francisco's automated transit-only lane enforcement program for an additional year and required the City and County to provide a report to the Transportation and Judiciary Committees of the Legislature no later than March 1, 2015, describing the effectiveness of the pilot program and its impact on privacy. (AB 1041, Ma, Ch. 325, Stats. 2011.) Following the receipt of that report, San Francisco's transit-only lane enforcement program was permanently extended in AB 1287 (Chiu, Ch. 485, Stats. 2015).

The following year, AB 1051 (Hancock, Ch. 427, Stats. 2016) authorized AC Transit to operate an automated transit-only lane enforcement program similar to San Francisco's, with a sunset on January 1, 2022. AC Transit was required to provide to the Transportation, Privacy and Consumer Protection, and Judiciary Committees of the Legislature an evaluation report of the enforcement system's effectiveness, impact on privacy, cost to implement, and generation of revenue, no later than January 1, 2021. (Veh. Code § 40240.5.) AB 917 (Bloom, Ch. 709, Stats. 2021) expanded automated enforcement of parking violations using forward-facing cameras on transit vehicles to include both transit-only lanes and transit stops and extended the authorization statewide until January 1, 2027.

More recently, AB 645 (Friedman, Ch. 808, Stats. 2023) authorized six localities to deploy speed safety systems in designated roadways, including official "safety corridors," school zones, and streets a local authority has determined to have had a high number of incidents for motor vehicle speed contests or motor vehicle exhibitions of speed. Last session, SB 1297 (Allen, Ch. 631, Stats. 2024) established a speed safety system pilot project for the PCH that was substantially similar to the one in AB 645. Just last year, AB 289 (Haney, Ch. 684, Stats. 2025) authorized the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to establish a five-year work zone speed safety pilot program to enforce speeding violations in highway maintenance and construction work zones using speed safety systems.

2. Expanding automated speed enforcement

This bill again authorizes an automated speed safety pilot program, this time for a section of the PCH running through the City of Long Beach. It is nearly identical to recent laws, specifically AB 645 and AB 1297.

According to the author:

For the last two years, six cities throughout California, including Long Beach, have been rolling out a speed camera pilot program, placing speed cameras in areas like high-injury intersections and streets with elevated crash rates. These speed cameras are already making streets safer – since activating speed cameras, San Francisco has seen a 72% decrease in speeding. Unfortunately, current law regulating the pilot program does not allow Long Beach to place speed cameras along the City’s portion of Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), where over 20% of the City’s speeding-related fatalities occur.

While the PCH only accounts for 8 miles of Long Beach’s 217 miles of high-capacity roadway, it accounts for 39 of its 192 crash fatalities since 2020. That means that 20% of the City’s crash fatalities have occurred on less than 1% of its roads. SB 1279 will give the City the authority it needs to place speed cameras along the PCH and make this road safer for the community.

3. Privacy, equity, due process, and effectiveness versus revenue generation

Various concerns have previously been raised about these sorts of programs, including privacy, equity, due process, and the balance of effective enforcement of safety laws against perverse financial incentives.

As to privacy, there have been concerns about automated imaging that records not only vehicles, but also individuals on sidewalks and commercial and residential property adjacent to the roadway. To provide a layer of protection, the information being collected as part of these programs is deemed confidential and not subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act. In addition, there are retention limitations: information that a vehicle has been cited and fined for a violation may be kept for up to three years, but other records may only be kept for up to 60 days. Photographic evidence that does not result in a violation must be destroyed within five business days. The bill also requires the speed safety system, to the extent feasible, to be angled and focused so as to only capture photographs of speeding violations and shall not capture identifying images of other drivers, vehicles, or pedestrians.

There are also use limitations placed on the evidence, allowing public agencies to use or allow access to the information collected and maintained through a speed safety system only as needed to administer the program or measure its impacts. The bill prohibits disclosure of information collected to any other persons, including any other state or federal government agency or official, for any other purpose, except as required by state or federal law, court order, or in response to a subpoena in an individual case or proceeding. These are all protections that were negotiated into the previous automated speed enforcement programs.

Additional concerns have been expressed over the use of automated enforcement programs not as a means to promote roadway safety, but as a mechanism for revenue generation, and how that might affect the fairness and equity of the program. Ultimately, there is concern that those paying for whatever revenue generation there is will be disproportionately low-income communities who tend to bear the brunt of the cost of citations. Depending on how authorized local agencies administer this new power, it could lead to an unreasonable or inflexible mode of enforcement that would not necessarily be the case with enforcement by officers present to witness a speeding violation.

Photographic evidence necessarily limits the field of view of an observer and prevents consideration of relevant facts that would otherwise be available to an officer who sees an event transpire in person. In addition, the holistic assessment that can be performed by an actual person on the ground allows for more thoughtful and judicious enforcement of speeding violations. Ultimately, the technology and process will inevitably lead to errors. For these reasons, people may be less likely to identify errors in the technology or process that led to their notice of violation. The bill also provides that photographic evidence stored by a speed safety system does not constitute an out-of-court hearsay statement by a declarant.

To address concerns of equity, the bill does provide for some notice to affected communities. It requires a 30-day public information campaign before a system can be deployed. Additionally, the bill provides that only warning notices may be issued for the first 60 days, and thereafter, a vehicle's first violation may only be issued a warning notice where the violation is for traveling 11 to 15 miles per hour over the limit.

The civil penalties are also capped depending on the severity of the violation, \$50 for violations of 11 to 15 miles per hour above the posted speed limit, up to \$500 for driving 100 miles per hour or more. In addition, the bill requires Long Beach to offer violation recipients who are indigent the option to pay applicable fines and penalties over a period of time under a payment plan with monthly installments not to exceed \$25. Any processing fee to participate in a payment plan is prohibited from exceeding \$5. In addition, the designated jurisdiction must offer a diversion program for indigent violators to perform community service or complete an education program in lieu of paying the penalty.

To ensure accountability and oversight, Long Beach is required to submit a report that evaluates its impacts, particularly on street safety and the economic impact on the communities where the system is utilized.

4. Stakeholder positions

The City of Long Beach, the sponsor of the bill, writes:

Assembly Bill 645 (AB 645) authorized a limited pilot program for use of automated speed safety systems in six California cities, including the City of Long Beach, to address excessive speeding on high-injury corridors. However, AB 645 explicitly prohibits speed safety system devices from being operated on any California state routes, including PCH. SB 1279 addresses this limitation by allowing up to six speed safety systems along the limited section of PCH within the City's limits.

The additional speed safety systems authorized by SB 1279 will be subject to the same privacy and equity considerations established by AB 645. The system is designed to capture only the rear license plate of the violating vehicle and will not record the faces of drivers, passengers, or bystanders. No individual citation information will be shared with the Long Beach Police Department or other enforcement agencies.

Automated enforcement systems like those authorized by AB 645 are a critical tool in advancing local Safe Streets and Vision Zero goals, as speed is the most significant factor in determining the severity of a crash. Data from the National Traffic Speeds Survey, administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, shows that at 20 miles per hour (MPH), there is only a 13% likelihood of a pedestrian fatality or severe injury, compared to 40% at 30 MPH and 73% at 40 MPH. By encouraging reduced speeds, automated enforcement directly lowers the risk of death and life-altering injuries, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists who are most vulnerable and prevalent on this highly urbanized segment of the highway. Automated speed enforcement systems also utilize warning and speed feedback signage to focus on prevention rather than punishment, creating safer streets for all users and ensuring more consistent compliance with speed limits than traditional enforcement methods alone.

This approach also allows valuable law enforcement resources to be dedicated to higher-priority safety needs, while providing an equitable and transparent alternative to discretionary traffic stops. Importantly, automated systems complement, rather than replace, road design and

education efforts, helping to address speeding on corridors where engineering changes may be cost-prohibitive or take years to implement.

Writing in opposition, the National Motorists Association argues that there is no demonstrated safety need for the bill and that there are more effective methods, namely, traffic engineering countermeasures, that could further the stated goal of the author. The association also argues that despite previous assertions, the expansion of these types of programs continues unabated:

The Speed Ticketing Camera Pilot Program authorized under AB-645 resulted from extensive negotiations over multiple legislative sessions. The agreement set forth a maximum number of six participant cities, each allotted a specific number of camera installations. Numerous stakeholder groups negotiated in good faith with the bill's author, Assemblymember Friedman, to determine the number of cities and cameras authorized to participate in the pilot program. Parties to these negotiations relied on the terms of these agreements when deciding how to expend their efforts during the legislative process.

Before the pilot program even began, legislators approved an expansion of the pilot program to PCH in Malibu. Now legislators are attempting to add another city to the pilot program. One may ask, "What is the harm of adding an additional city at this time?" The answer is simple - agreements negotiated in good faith must be honored. If not, how can the public trust the legislative process in the future? What incentive will there be to negotiate with legislators if they can nullify any resulting agreements in the next legislative session? Trust in our institutions is at an all-time low. When legislators renege on agreements, it further erodes the public's trust - and we are all the worse off for it. It is distressing that legislators now wish to void prior agreements. If SB-1279 is approved, in every future year, there will undoubtedly be more cities requesting authorization to be added to the pilot. At what point does this end? Will we just continue adding more cities each year? At what point is it enough?

In order to address some concerns that have been raised about the length and scope of the program, the author has agreed to the following amendments:

- States the intent of the Legislature is for this expansion of speed safety systems to be a one-time expansion to increase safety in the relevant high-injury corridor.
- Shortens the authorization for the program to a sunset of January 1, 2032.
- Limits the program to only five speed safety systems instead of six.

SUPPORT

City of Long Beach (sponsor)
Car-lite Long Beach
City of Long Beach Councilmember, Daryl Supernaw
City of Long Beach Councilmember, Roberto Uranga
City of Long Beach Councilmember, Suely Saro
City of Signal Hill
PeopleForBikes
Streets are for Everyone (SAFE)
Streets for All

OPPOSITION

National Motorists Association

RELATED LEGISLATION

SB 1292 (Richardson, 2026) authorizes a local agency, as defined, to establish an enhanced curb management system that records images of vehicles for the purpose of enforcing parking violations or automating parking payments if certain requirements are met. It requires a local agency that automates parking payments by charging vehicles a fee for access to outline the fee, and any adjusted rates, in an ordinance or resolution. SB 1292 is currently in the Senate Transportation Committee.

SB 1297 (Allen, Ch. 631, Stats. 2024) *See Comment 1.*

AB 645 (Friedman, Ch. 808, Stats. 2023) *See Comment 1.*

AB 917 (Bloom, Ch. 709, Stats. 2021) *See Comment 1.*

AB 1051 (Hancock, Ch. 427, Stats. 2016) *See Comment 1.*

AB 1287 (Chiu, Ch. 485, Stats. 2015) *See Comment 1.*

AB 1041 (Ma, Ch. 325, Stats. 2011) *See Comment 1.*

AB 2567 (Bradford, Ch. 471, Stats. 2010) *See Comment 1.*

AB 101 (Ma, Ch. 377, Stats. 2007) *See Comment 1.*

SB 1136 (Kopp, Ch. 54, Stats. 1998) *See Comment 1.*

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SB 833 (Kopp, Ch. 922, Stats. 1995) *See* Comment 1.

SB 1802 (Rosenthal, Ch. 1216, Stats. 1994) *See* Comment 1.

PRIOR VOTES:

Senate Transportation Committee (Ayes 10, Noes 1)
