

Date of Hearing: July 1, 2026

Fiscal: Yes

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PRIVACY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Chair

SB 1279 (Gonzalez) – As Amended June 26, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-6

SUBJECT: Speed safety systems

SYNOPSIS

In an effort to combat speeding and decrease the number of traffic fatalities, AB 645 (Friedman, Ch. 808, Stats. 2023) established a pilot program in the Cities of Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, Glendale, and Long Beach, as well as in the City and County of San Francisco, to allow for the installation of automated speed enforcement (ASE) systems. This bill expands on this pilot program by allowing the City of Long Beach to install two additional speed safety systems on the eight-mile stretch of the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) that runs through the city.

The question of whether these systems will help to reduce reckless driving and increase traffic safety is within the jurisdiction of the Transportation Committee.

For this Committee, the primary consideration is whether this bill contains adequate measures to protect people's privacy. AB 645 already has a significant number of privacy provisions, including requiring that photographic or administrative records generated by the speed safety system be confidential, and allows these records only to be used to administer the program, and not be disclosed to any other person, including any other state or federal government agency or official for any other purpose, except as required by state or federal law, or court order. Additionally, the systems are required, to the extent feasible, to be angled to only capture photographs of speeding violations. Any portion of the images that incidentally captures other vehicles, drivers, or pedestrians not subject to a violation must be blurred.

This bill is sponsored by the City of Long Beach and is supported by a coalition of advocacy groups, such as Streets for All and Streets are for Everyone, as well as by elected officials of the City of Long Beach. The bill is opposed by the National Motorists Association.

This bill was previously heard by the Transportation Committee, where it passed on a 14-1-1 vote.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes a speed safety system pilot program in the cities of Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, Glendale, and San Francisco with the following provisions:
 - a. The number of cameras is capped and the trial is limited to five years.
 - b. The program must be approved by the local governing body and is subject to substantial public input, notice and warnings.

- c. The cameras are prohibited from being placed on any California state routes.
 - d. Violations are a civil penalty with specified fines which may be lowered depending on income.
 - e. Fine revenue pays for the operation of the pilot with any extra revenues dedicated to traffic calming measures.
 - f. An appeals process and privacy protections are established.
 - g. The local governing body must report to the Legislature on the impact of the program. (Veh. Code § 22425.)
- 2) Establishes a speed safety system pilot program in the City of Malibu which allows for up to five cameras on PCH, requires enhanced signage to alert drivers of their speed, the speed limit, and the presence of video enforcement, and requires the City of Malibu to continue funding additional patrols by the California Highway Patrol (CHP). The program can operate for five years or until January 1, 2032, whichever is earlier. (Veh. Code § 22435.)
 - 3) Establishes a speed safety system pilot program in work zones on state highways administered by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans). (Veh. Code § 22445.)
 - 4) Establishes a “basic speed law” that prohibits a person from driving a vehicle at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent given the weather, visibility, traffic, highway conditions, and in no event at a speed that endangers the safety of persons or property. (Veh. Code § 22362.)
 - 5) Authorizes the use of automated traffic enforcement systems (i.e., red light cameras) at railroad crossings and intersections to record violations of unlawful grade crossings and running of red lights. (Veh. Code § 21455.5.)
 - 6) Requires a peace officer or “qualified employee” of a law enforcement agency to review the photograph taken by an automated traffic enforcement system and issue a citation, as appropriate. (Veh. Code § 21455.5.)
 - 7) Conditions the use of red light cameras on several requirements and procedures, including the following:
 - a. Only a governmental agency in cooperation with a law enforcement agency may operate a system.
 - b. Intersections equipped with the enforcement systems must be identified by signs visible to traffic in all directions or by signs posted at all major entrances to the participating city.
 - c. The city council or county board of supervisors must conduct a public hearing on the proposed use of an automated enforcement system.
 - d. Use of the system must be preceded by public notice by the local jurisdiction at least 30 days in advance, and only warning notices may be issued to violators during the first 30 days of the system’s operation, after which citations may be issued.

- e. All photographic records are confidential and shall be made available only to the affected governmental agencies for enforcement purposes.
 - f. Any driver alleged to be a violator of the red light provisions or the vehicle's registered owner is permitted to review the photographic evidence of the alleged violation.
 - g. Citations must be delivered to the driver within 15 days of the alleged violations, with a certificate of mailing obtained as evidence of service, and must include specified information, including how, when, and where the citation may be challenged. (Veh. Code § 21455.5.)
- 8) 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. (Veh. Code § 40240(a).)
- 9) Requires automated forward facing parking control 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(f).)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Authorizes the City of Long Beach to use speed safety systems on the PCH.
- 2) States that the City of Long Beach may have two additional speed safety systems on the PCH.
- 3) Requires the speed safety systems to blur any images that are unavoidably captured of other drivers, vehicles, or pedestrians who are not the subject of a notice of violation.
 - a. States that cameras installed prior to January 1, 2027 need to blur any images that are unavoidably captured of other drivers, vehicles, or pedestrians only to the extent feasible.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Author's statement.** According to the author:

For the past two years, six cities, including Long Beach, have been rolling out a speed camera pilot program, placing cameras in 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 make this road safer for the community.

2) A brief history of automated enforcement in California. For the past 30 years, California has introduced and passed a range of legislation that promotes automated enforcement of traffic violations. Beginning in 1994, SB 1802 (Rosenthal, Ch. 1216, Stats. 1994) was passed, which authorized the use of “automated rail crossing enforcement systems” to dissuade drivers from passing around or under rail crossings while the gates are closed.¹ These enforcement systems rely on cameras that photograph the front license plate and driver of a vehicle that proceeded around or under the rail crossing gates. The driver would then receive a citation for the violation to the home that was registered with the vehicle according to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

A year later, SB 883 (Kopp, Ch. 922, Stats. 1995) was introduced in the Legislature, which established a three-year pilot program for red light camera enforcement systems, which use similar camera detections to identify and cite drivers who pull into an intersection during a red light. The program was permanently extended in 1998 (SB 1136, Kopp, Ch. 54, Stats. 1998).

San Francisco was then authorized to begin a four-year pilot project in 2007, where the City and County installed 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.) In 2011, the project was extended for an additional year and the City and County were required to provide a report to the Legislature detailing the effectiveness of the program and its impact on privacy (AB 1041, Ma, Ch. 325, Stats. 2011). The program was permanently extended in 2015 (AB 1287, Chiu, Ch. 485, Stats. 2015).

In 2016, the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), the public bus system serving the East Bay, was authorized to operate an automated transit-only lane enforcement program similar to San Francisco's, with a sunset on January 1, 2022 (AB 1051, Hancock, Ch. 427, Stats. 2016). AC Transit was required to provide the Transportation, Privacy and Consumer Protection, and Judiciary Committees of the Legislature with an evaluation report of the enforcement system's effectiveness, impact on privacy, cost to implement, and generation of revenue.²

In 2023, the Legislature passed AB 645 (Friedman, Ch. 808, Stats. 2023), which authorized six localities, including the City of Long Beach, to install speed safety systems in designated roadways that have been determined to have had a high number of speeding incidents, not to include any California state routes. SB 1297 (Allen, Ch. 631, Stats. 2024) mirrored AB 645's speed safety system implementation framework for the stretch of the PCH that runs through the City of Malibu. Most recently, AB 289 (Haney, Ch. 684, Stats. 2025) authorized Caltrans to establish a five-year work zone speed safety pilot program using speed safety systems to enforce speeding violations in highway maintenance and construction work zones.

3) Effectiveness of speed safety systems. Both the Assembly and the Senate Transportation Committees report that automated speed safety cameras appear to be effective. Specifically, according to the Transportation Committee:

¹ Veh. Code § 22451.

² Veh. Code § 40240.5.

According to The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), a 2010 review of 28 studies of automated speed enforcement (ASE) in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand found a lower number of crashes after ASE implementation. These studies reported reductions of 8% to 49% for all crashes and reductions of 11% to 44% for crashes causing serious injuries or fatalities.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) “Crash-based evaluations from the United States and Canada have also reported safety benefits from speed safety cameras programs in urban areas. Shin et al. (2009) examined effects of a fixed camera enforcement program applied to a 6.5-mile urban freeway section through Scottsdale, Arizona. The speed limit on the enforced freeway was 65 mph; the enforcement trigger was set to 76 mph. Total *target* (off-peak/free-flow) crashes were reduced by an estimated 44 to 54%, injury crashes by 28 to 48%, and property damage only crashes by 46 to 56% during the 9-month program period.”

However, the National Motorists Association, in opposition to this bill, argue that speed safety cameras are not effective safety measures when road fatalities are not caused by unsafe speeding, as they argue is the case on the City of Long Beach’s stretch of the PCH. Specifically, they argue:

In brief, the statistics being used to support SB 1279 are misleading as presented. They make PCH appear to be an extreme outlier by moving between different comparison groups: PCH by itself, all state highways in Long Beach, all city traffic fatalities, and surface-street fatalities. When the comparisons are stated clearly and adjusted for traffic volume, the data do not show that PCH stands out from other Long Beach surface streets in a way that justifies adding five speed cameras.

We found that:

1. The fatality data we reviewed do not show an unusual unsafe-speed problem on PCH. From 2020 through 2025, the SWITRS database shows **zero PCH fatalities attributed to unsafe speed.**
2. When traffic volume is accounted for, PCH does not stand out from other Long Beach surface streets. **PCH’s driver-at-fault fatality rate was approximately 1.18 fatalities per 100 million VMT, compared with approximately 1.34 fatalities per 100 million VMT on non-PCH surface streets.** This means PCH’s driver-at-fault fatality rate is about **12% lower** than the rate on other Long Beach surface streets.

Since speeding is not a major cause of injury collisions along PCH, deploying ticketing cameras can offer little safety benefit.

4) **Privacy concerns related to technology that collects location information.** The primary jurisdiction of this Committee is to determine if the addition of these speed safety systems significantly infringes on privacy protections afforded under the California Constitution. The widespread adoption of digital technology means that every Californian leaves a trove of

personal information and data following nearly every interaction, both in the physical world and online, including every website visited, credit card payment, and browser search.³

In the physical world, we cannot step out of our homes without being monitored and tracked. Cars collect location data everywhere we drive. Phones, our constant companions, collect location data everywhere we go. If a car is too old to collect location data and a person leaves their phone at home, license plate readers and traffic cameras are at virtually every intersection, on freeways, at the entrance of parking garages, in store parking lots, and toll roads. These devices are tracking the movement of every single car that passes by. It has become virtually impossible for people to move through the United States without being tracked.

The slow erosion of privacy through the collection of what seem to be relatively small pieces of personal information may not cause people to be overly concerned. However, those pieces of information are being amassed into dossiers that disclose every aspect of the lives of everyone in the United States. The fact that these dossiers are being made available to individuals, private companies, and local, state, and federal government agencies should be cause for alarm. University of Virginia Law Professor Danielle Citron warned in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2022, “We don’t viscerally appreciate the ways in which companies and governments surveil our lives by amassing intimate information about our bodies, our health, our closest relationships, our sexual activities and our innermost thoughts. Companies are selling this information to data brokers, who are compiling dossiers with about 3,000 data points on each of us.”⁴

As it pertains to this bill, the addition of two cameras along the eight-mile stretch of the PCH in the City of Long Beach, one of the most well-traveled highways in California, marks one more method for tracking people in California. These cameras capture not only license plate information in a photograph, but also collect the exact time, date, and location where the image was taken. However, if the bill appropriately limits the collection, storage, and retention of the data, the information should be adequately protected from being accessed by data brokers who can combine the information with thousands of other data points related to the registered owner of the vehicle for their own financial gain.

5) Privacy protections contained in this bill. This bill includes a number of provisions to ensure that the privacy of drivers is protected in the cities authorized to use speed safety systems. For example, the bill requires that photographic or administrative records generated by the speed safety system be confidential and only used to administer a program. The bill prohibits the information from being disclosed to any other person, including any other state or federal government agency or official for any other purpose, except as required by state or federal law, or court order.

The pilot cities are only permitted to retain speed safety system data and evidence for 60 days and speed safety system administrative records for 120 days following final disposition of a violation, after which the data, evidence, and administrative records must be destroyed in a

³ Emile Ayoub and Elizabeth Goitein. *Closing the Data Broker Loophole*, The Brennan Center for Justice (Feb. 13, 2024).

⁴ Laurie Clarke. “Interview - Law professor Danielle Citron: ‘Privacy is essential to human flourishing,’” *The Guardian* (Oct. 2, 2022) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/02/danielle-citron-privacy-is-essential-to-human-flourishing>.

manner that maintains the confidentiality of any person included in the evidence. Cities are also required to destroy any speed safety system data within five days if the data shows no evidence of a speeding violation. Finally, the bill also ensures that any vendors are held to these same standards and provides that any speed safety system data collected is confidential and may not be shared, repurposed, or monetized for purposes other than speed safety system enforcement. The bill additionally prohibits the use of facial recognition software and requires any image of any nonrelevant driver, vehicle, or pedestrian be blurred.

6) What this bill would do. Under the current pilot program, the City of Long Beach is authorized to have 18 speed safety systems; however, the city is prohibited from distributing any of these cameras along the eight-mile stretch of the PCH that runs through Long Beach. Given the high rates of injuries and deaths occurring on this stretch of highway, this bill seeks to expand the pilot program slightly by authorizing the City of Long Beach to add two additional speed safety systems to the PCH. Additionally, this bill adds requirements for all speed safety systems to blur any images incidentally collected of any nonrelevant drivers, vehicles, or pedestrians not subject to a notice of violation.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The Mayor of the City of Long Beach, Rex Richardson, writes in support:

Long Beach's segment of PCH, spanning approximately 8.5 miles, constitutes less than 1% of the city's arterial road network, but accounts for nearly 20% of traffic fatalities. Since 2020, state highways within City limits, including PCH, have been the site of 52 out of 192 deaths in Long Beach, representing 27% of the city's crash fatalities. Heartbreaking incidents, involving pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, occur with alarming frequency, illustrating the need for additional tools and resources to appropriately address this growing challenge.

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.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: In opposition to the bill, the National Motorists Association argues:

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 Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. Now City of Long Beach officials are requesting the Legislature grant an additional five ticketing cameras on PCH in their city, a nearly 30% increase in their camera allotment, before their program has even begun. This would result in a higher concentration of ticketing cameras per mile on PCH in Long Beach than was granted to Malibu's section of PCH.

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 are proposing to void prior agreements. If SB 1279 is approved, in every future year, there will undoubtedly be more cities requesting additional cameras or authorization to be added to the pilot. For example, if SB 1279 is approved, unquestionably the City of Los Angeles, which also hasn't yet implemented their program, will argue that they are also due an increase in the number of cameras they are permitted to use. At what point does this end? Will we just continue adding more cities each year? Either this is a pilot program with clearly defined parameters or it isn't.

We ask that each member of the Assembly Transportation Committee carefully consider whether they wish to be a party to a breach of the Legislature's prior agreements by voting in support of SB 1279.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Long Beach (sponsor)
AAA Northern California, Nevada & Utah
Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
Auto Club of Southern California (AAA)
Bike Long Beach
California Bicycle Coalition
Car-lite Long Beach
City of Signal Hill
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Streets are for Everyone (SAFE) (ORG)
Streets for All (UNREG)

Oppose

National Motorists Assoc

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