
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 1293 (Alvarado-Gil) - State highways: projects: notice

Version: April 6, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 27, 2026

Policy Vote: TRANS. 12 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: SB 1293 would require the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to provide written notice to affected residents and businesses located within five miles of a construction or maintenance project on a state highway in a county with a population of 60,000 or fewer people, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- Caltrans estimates annual ongoing administrative costs would likely be in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars for staff time and postage to produce, prepare, print, and mail written notices of rural projects. Actual costs would depend on the number of qualifying rural projects in a given year, and the parameters of those projects. (State Highway Account)

Background: The state highway system, owned and managed by Caltrans, is made up of roughly 15,000 maintained miles, or 51,000 lane miles, and 13,000 bridges, including both federal and state highways. The rural state highway system in California includes over 30,000 lane miles, the majority of which are non-freeway, lower-speed, and conventionally designed highways. While the urban system has higher traffic volumes, most of the total state-maintained highway mileage is in these rural, lower-volume areas. Many rural areas have state highways that serve as their downtown main street.

The planning, design, and construction of Caltrans transportation projects takes many years. Throughout a project's life cycle, Caltrans engages the public, including local officials, community groups, and stakeholders. The Caltrans Construction Manual includes guidance on relations with the public, stating "public outreach and stakeholder engagement addresses Caltrans' mandated responsibility to make sure that projects do not adversely affect communities." The Construction Manual also notes that "Construction operations, including temporary closures of streets and driveways, and construction noise (especially at night) may have an adverse effect on residents and businesses adjacent to the project. Informing people living and working near the project about the reason for, and the duration of the activity, will go a long way towards a higher degree of acceptance and tolerance." In addition, the Caltrans Maintenance Manual states that "the Maintenance Program will practice proper scheduling and planning of routine maintenance procedures to keep delays at a minimum. Reasonable efforts should be made to correct conditions that interfere with the orderly flow of traffic." Caltrans also has a website and app for mobile devices called QuickMap that provides up-to-the-minute updates on closures and detours.

In an effort to increase meaningful engagement with the public throughout the planning and project delivery process, Caltrans has developed a suite of new tools, including a new Director's Policy on external engagement, a community engagement statewide

playbook, and a web-based Caltrans Engagement Portal all designed to make engagement more consistent, trackable, and easier to carry forward from planning into design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction. District playbooks will also be developed to adapt the statewide guidance to local conditions. The online portal, which was launched in 2023, will provide details of projects, collect surveys and comments, and host hybrid meetings for participant input. Finally, each district will have a new community engagement coordinator position whose responsibilities will include development of public engagement plans, advising project teams, maintaining the portal, and drafting the district playbooks.

Proposed Law: SB 1293 would require Caltrans to provide written notice to an affected resident or business located within five miles of a rural project on a state highway in a county with a population of 60,000 or fewer people. The notice must be provided to an affected resident or business at least 14 days before commencing construction or maintenance, and it must describe the rural project, including any planned closures, traffic detours, and appropriate contact information for the department or contractor. Caltrans must also post the notice on its website.

The bill defines a “rural project” as any construction or maintenance project that meets both of the following:

- Is planned to be performed within a state highway right-of-way in a county with a population of 60,000 or fewer people.
- Is scheduled to include a lane or road closure for either seven days or more if no alternate route is available, or 14 days or more if an alternate route is available.

Staff Comments: According to the author, local officials and business owners have concerns about notification and communication from Caltrans about planned projects that directly impact their rural communities, specifically during maintenance work and construction. As noted above, many rural communities have a state highway as their main street, and many rural communities do not have alternative routes to avoid a project area. Partial lane shutdowns or full road closures can significantly impact businesses and residents.

This bill would require Caltrans to provide notice to residents and businesses when lengthy road and lane closures are planned in conjunction with construction and maintenance projects in counties with a population of 60,000 or fewer, which would apply to 16 of the state’s 58 counties. Caltrans’ fiscal estimate assumes that as many as two dozen projects statewide in a given year would meet the definition of a “rural project” that would trigger the public notice requirements.

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