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THIRD READING

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Bill No: SB 1293  
Author: Alvarado-Gil (R), et al.  
Amended: 4/6/26  
Vote: 21

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SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: 12-0, 4/14/26  
AYES: Cortese, Strickland, Archuleta, Arreguín, Blakespear, Dahle, Gonzalez,  
Grayson, Menjivar, Richardson, Seyarto, Wiener  
NO VOTE RECORDED: Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26  
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

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**SUBJECT:** State highways: projects: notice

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to provide written notice of planned closures and traffic detours for rural state highway construction and maintenance projects, as defined, at least 14 days before the project begins.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Vests Caltrans with possession and control of all state highways and the responsibility for the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of the state highway system.
- 2) Requires Caltrans, based on the asset management plan, to prepare a state highway operation and protection program (SHOPP) for the expenditure of transportation funds for major capital improvements that are necessary to preserve and protect the state highway system. Limits projects to improvements

relative to the maintenance, safety, operation, and rehabilitation of state highways and bridges that do not add a new traffic lane to the system.

- 3) Requires Caltrans to develop a five-year maintenance plan that addresses the maintenance needs of the state highway system. Requires the maintenance plan to include only maintenance activities that, if the activities are not performed, could result in increased SHOPP costs in the future. Requires the maintenance plan to identify any existing backlog in those maintenance activities and recommend a strategy, specific activities, and an associated funding level to reduce or prevent any backlog during the plan five-year period.

This bill:

- 1) Defines “affected resident” to mean a person who resides in, or a business that is located within, five miles of the project limits, as determined by Caltrans.
- 2) Defines “rural project” to mean any construction or maintenance project that meets both of the following:
  - a) Is planned to be performed within the right-of-way of a state highway in a county with a population of 60,000 people or fewer; and,
  - b) Is scheduled to include a lane closure or a 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.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to provide written notice of a rural project to an affected resident at least 14 days before the construction or maintenance of a rural project begins.
- 4) Requires the notice to describe the rural project, including, but not limited to, any planned closures, traffic detours, and appropriate contact information for Caltrans or a contractor. Requires Caltrans to also post the notice on its internet website.

## Comments

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, “SB 1293 addresses a persistent communication gap between Caltrans and rural communities when transportation projects significantly disrupt local travel and commerce. While existing Caltrans guidelines outline public engagement practices, recent

experiences in small counties demonstrate that residents and businesses are often unaware of major road closures or delays until after impacts occur, resulting in lost revenue, limited access to essential services, and extended detours. This bill establishes a notification requirement by directing Caltrans to provide advance written notice to residents and businesses within a five-mile radius of certain projects in counties with populations of 60,000 or less when traffic will be obstructed for a sustained period. By ensuring timely and direct communication in areas where internet access may be inconsistent and alternative routes are limited, SB 1293 promotes transparency, supports local economies, and helps rural communities better prepare for and respond to transportation disruptions.”

- 2) *The state highway system.* California has a large network of highways and local streets and roads, consisting of almost 400,000 lane miles of pavement and over 25,000 bridges. 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, which predominantly consist of non-freeway, lower-speed, and conventionally designed highways. While the urban system has higher traffic volumes, the majority 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. For example, State Highway 49 is the main street in San Andreas, in Calaveras County, and Sutter Creek, in Amador County, and State Highway 120 is the main street in Groveland in Tuolumne County.
- 3) *Caltrans State Highway Projects.* The goal of Caltrans is to maintain existing facilities as nearly as possible to the original condition as constructed or improved. That goal is managed and funded in two main programs, the maintenance program and SHOPP. Caltrans develops a five-year maintenance plan that addresses the maintenance needs of the state highway system. The maintenance plan includes only maintenance activities that, if the activities are not performed, could result in increased SHOPP costs in the future. Requires the maintenance plan to identify any existing backlog in those maintenance activities and recommend a strategy, specific activities, and an associated funding level to reduce or prevent any backlog during the plan five-year period.

SHOPP is a four-year program of projects that collectively improves the condition, operation, and sustainability of state highway system and associated transportation infrastructure. SHOPP is a “fix-it-first” program and projects

funded by SHOPP are limited to capital improvements that do not add new through highway lanes. SHOPP is also responsible for funding projects that address emergency repair needs. SHOPP funds rehabilitation and reconstruction of state highways and bridges and supporting infrastructure such as culverts, traffic management centers, safety roadside rest areas, and maintenance stations. SHOPP portfolio of projects is updated every two years, carrying forward the last two years of projects programmed in the preceding SHOPP and programming in two new years of projects based on the State Highway System Management Plan and resulting district plans.

- 4) *Outreach and notification.* The planning, design, and construction of Caltrans transportation projects takes many years. Throughout the process, Caltrans engages the public, including local officials, community groups, and stakeholders. There are existing methods of public outreach for the various stages of a project's life cycle, however, it is unclear how the public and stakeholders can stay connected with Caltrans through a project's development and construction.

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 mentioned above, many rural communities have a state highway as their main street. Additionally, many rural communities do not have alternative routes to avoid a project area. Partial lane shutdowns or full road closures can have a major impact on businesses and residents. The author noted that a recent closure of State Route 120 in Groveland in Tuolumne County for a project cut off traffic to downtown businesses. The closure caused restaurants to close temporarily. Local business owners reported that they were not aware of the project and the planned closure ahead of time and were, therefore, not able to make alternate plans.

Currently, 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."

Further, "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. Timely notice is important. Also consider rescheduling construction activity around major businesses or public events.”

Additionally, the Caltrans Maintenance Manual states, “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.”

Finally, for up-to-the-minute updates on closures and detours, Caltrans has a website and app for mobile devices called QuickMap.

- 5) *Caltrans is committed to better outreach.* In an effort to increase meaningful engagement with the public throughout the planning and project delivery process, Caltrans is developing 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.

- 6) *SB 1293 requires more direct communication.* Caltrans’ new commitment to public engagement is focused on the entire project life cycle. The goal would be to inform local partners and the public about projects from their inception through construction. The author is focused on the unique circumstances in rural communities experiencing the direct impacts of Caltrans’ construction work. As the department implements their new strategies, especially the local engagement coordinator and the online portal tool, these communities will have the opportunity to be connected throughout the entire process and therefore would not be surprised by project activities.

Specifically, SB 1293 requires Caltrans to provide written notice to affected residents and businesses located within five miles of a project at least 14 days

before construction commences. The notice must describe the project, including any planned closures, traffic detours, and contact information for Caltrans or the contractor. Caltrans will also be required to post this information on its website.

To focus on rural transportation projects, this bill only applies to state highways in counties under 60,000 in population. Additionally, the project must have a planned lane or road closure for either seven days if no alternate route is available or 14 days if an alternate route is available.

- 7) *Implementation challenges.* Caltrans may have some challenges implementing the provisions of this bill. Specially, they must determine the limits of the ongoing project and then identify every residence and business in the project area to send a written notice. In many cases the owner of record for a property is not the person inhabiting it. Therefore, the people who need to be informed of lane and road closure may not receive the notice. Additionally, if Caltrans misses a residence or business in the project area, it could potentially create a legal liability for the department.

Additionally, many Caltrans projects are considered emergency repairs as the result of damage to the facility, usually from extreme weather events. In fact, in recent years, Caltrans has allocated more than \$1 billion annually of SHOPP project funds to emergency repairs. Emergency projects would not have the same lead time for Caltrans or contractors to be able to provide a written notice for affected residents.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 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)

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 5/14/26)

Calaveras County District 3 Supervisor

Daniel Anaiah Kirk District 3 Supervisor, County of Tuolumne

Stephen A. Griefer District 4 Supervisor, County of Tuolumne

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 5/14/26)

None received

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** Calaveras County Supervisor Martin Huberty states “recent experiences within my district have demonstrated that communities are often not provided with sufficient advance notice of major road closures or prolonged construction impacts. These communication gaps have resulted in significant consequences, including lost revenue for businesses, lack of emergency access and extended detours with limited alternatives. SB 1293 provides a practical and targeted solution by requiring Caltrans to provide advance written notice to residents and businesses within a five-mile radius of certain projects in counties with populations of 60,000 or less when traffic will be obstructed for a sustained period.”

Prepared by: Melissa White / TRANS. / (916) 651-4121  
5/16/26 11:04:16

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