

to include, but not be limited to, publishing that information on its internet website.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, “SB 1382 addresses ongoing concerns from rural communities regarding the lack of clear and timely communication about the opening of mountain passes under Caltrans’ control. While safety and weather conditions must guide operational decisions, rural residents and local officials have consistently expressed frustration with limited visibility into expected opening timelines, making it difficult to plan for travel, commerce, and seasonal activity. This bill establishes a reasonable and transparent framework by requiring Caltrans to inform local officials, where feasible, of proposed opening schedules by April 1 each year and to develop a public outreach plan to better communicate closures and openings to the public. By improving coordination with local governments and ensuring more consistent public communication, SB 1382 helps rural residents, businesses, and visitors better plan for seasonal access while maintaining necessary flexibility for safety considerations.”
- 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 consists 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 mountain passes.* As part of California’s state highway network, Caltrans also manages highways that traverse the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Of these highways, three include passes in the Central Sierra that are closed, with physical gates, during winter and reopened in the spring. Specifically, these passes, which are located in Caltrans District 10, are Ebbetts Pass on State Route 4 in Alpine County, Monitor Pass on State Route 89 also in Alpine County, and Sonora Pass on State Route 108 in Tuolumne County. Additionally, Tiaoga Pass on State Route 120 in Mariposa County, which is the highest

mountain pass in California at 9,943 feet, is also closed during the winter months. However, Tiaoga Pass is located on the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park and is therefore managed by the National Park Service.

- 4) *When will the passes open?* According to Caltrans, District 10 manages the timely seasonal closing and opening of the three passes, and it is not the same dates every year. They consider public and worker safety, public and economic interests, weather conditions, and existing snow levels as factors in determining the actual closing and opening dates from year to year. Last year, all three mountain passes were closed on December 26, 2025.

Although the locations for winter closures remain the same from year to year, the effort and time necessary for mountain pass openings can vary greatly. The major factors that affect the efforts are the amount of accumulated snow, the frequency and duration of late season spring storms, springtime temperatures, and winter damage to the roadway.

Caltrans maintenance crews typically begin removing snow from the roadway on the first Monday of April each year, and work seven days per week, if possible due to weather conditions, until each pass is free of snow and all roadway hazards before declaring them officially open for the spring and summer months. Specifically, the process of removing the snow requires Caltrans maintenance crews to wait for a break in winter weather, send a team to evaluate the situation, and then start unpacking and pulling out the snow. Typically, the snow can be 30-40 feet high and tower above the equipment. The maintenance crews start removing snow on both sides of the pass and meet in the middle. Finally, the roadway is assessed for possible damage, including signage and guardrails that may need to be replaced.

- 5) *Concerns about timing.* As noted, the date for opening the mountain passes varies from year to year but generally is mid to late May. According to information provided by the author from a Tuolumne County official, since 1986, the Sonora Pass has opened after May 1st roughly 95% of the time, with a few years that it opened after Memorial Day, due to late heavy snow. Some local officials are concerned that Caltrans is not timing the opening of the passes based on conditions, and that in lighter snow years the road could likely be opened earlier, by two to four weeks.
- 6) *SB 1382 would require Caltrans to connect with locals and the public.* According to Caltrans, they utilize a number of communication options for the local officials and the public to get information about weather conditions on the Sierra roadways, including the closure and opening of the mountain passes. For

up-to-the minute updates, Caltrans has a website and app for mobile devices called QuickMap. Additionally, District 10 sends out notices to local officials, and traffic advisories to local news outlets and posts on social media with estimates of mountain pass opening.

SB 1382 would require Caltrans, on or before April 1st each year, to notify elected officials of their proposed schedule for opening the mountain passes. Additionally, the bill would require Caltrans to develop a public outreach plan to inform the public about the closing and opening of the mountain passes, including publishing the information on its website.

Writing in support of the bill, Tuolumne County Supervisor Daniel Anaiah Kirk states, “For regions like Tuolumne County, predictable access through corridors such as Highway 108 is not just a convenience, it is an economic lifeline. Even small delays in opening can result in significant financial losses, while timely openings can generate substantial economic activity for local businesses, lodging, restaurants, and recreation providers.”

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

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, April 8, 2026.)

SUPPORT:

Calaveras County District 3 Supervisor
Daniel Anaiah Kirk, District 3 Supervisor, County of Tuolumne
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)

OPPOSITION:

None received

-- END --