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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### SB 1423 (Stern) - Active Transportation Program: report

**Version:** April 23, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 11, 2026

**Policy Vote:** TRANS. 8 - 1

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Mark McKenzie

**Bill Summary:** SB 1423 would require the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to conduct a specified study that considers methods for reducing applicant and administrative burdens related to the Active Transportation Program (ATP) and submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2028.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- The CTC anticipates one-time costs in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars in 2027-28 for staff workload to engage stakeholders and explore options for revising the ATP application process, and submit a report to the Legislature. To the extent the study and report ultimately recommends implementation of a two-stage application process and/or preapplication screening, the CTC would incur significant costs related to program administration. See Staff Comments. (State Highway Account, Public Transportation Account)

**Background:** Existing law establishes the Active Transportation Program within Caltrans for the purpose of encouraging increased use of active modes of transportation, such as biking and walking. The ATP consolidates the following federal and state transportation programs into a single program: the Transportation Alternatives Program; Bicycle Transportation Account; and State Safe Routes to School. Existing law requires the CTC to develop guidelines and project selection criteria in consultation with the ATP Workgroup, which is formed to provide guidance on revisions to guidelines, schedules and procedures, project selection criteria, performance measures, and program evaluation.

The CTC adopts guidelines for each four-year cycle of funding and allocates the moneys to cities, counties, and regional agencies responsible for the development or operation of bikeways and roadways where bicycle travel is permitted, using minimum safety design criteria developed by Caltrans, as specified. According to the 2027 ATP Fund Estimate adopted by the CTC in March of 2026, a total of approximately \$1.16 billion in state and federal funds will be available for ATP projects over the four-year funding period, including \$297 million in the 2027-28 fiscal year.

**Proposed Law:** SB 1423 would require the CTC to conduct a study and submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2028 on opportunities to improve equity, accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and ease of application for prospective applicants for the ATP. The study must consider, at minimum, methods for reducing applicant and administrative burden, including both a two-phase application process and a preapplication screening process. These provisions would be repealed on January 1, 2032.

**Staff Comments:** The CTC indicates that the timeframes in the bill would be challenging to implement. Existing ATP program staff will be fully occupied with the programming and allocation actions associated with Cycle 8 of the program in early 2027, and any additional resources that may be provided through the budget process would not be available until July 1, 2027, leaving only 6 months to conduct the study and submit the report to the Legislature. The CTC further notes that the topic of a two-stage application process has been discussed through previous stakeholder workshops held review ATP guidelines and make updates before submitting a call for projects. The stakeholder consensus has consistently been opposed to the idea. The concept was also examined and rejected by the CTC's ATP Technical Advisory Workgroup, which provides guidance on these matters. Implementing a two-step process would likely impose a significant cost burden on the CTC without clear demonstrated benefits. It would require significant additional resources to address compressed timelines for guidelines workshops, site visits, and additional time for a second evaluation process within the current two-year programming calendar.

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