

Date of Hearing: July 14, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

SB 671 (Cervantes) – As Introduced February 20, 2025

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Pedestrian crossing signals

SUMMARY: Codifies the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) existing policy that requires touch-free accessible pedestrian signals (APS) to be installed at signalized pedestrian crossings on capital projects on the state highway system, encroachment permit projects, and highway maintenance-funded projects. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires Caltrans, on crosswalks with state-owned or -operated traffic-actuated signals, to install and maintain an APS pushbutton or touch-free APS on the pedestrian signal heads that activates "WALK" and "DON'T WALK" intervals and other visual signals at signalized intersections in nonvisual formats.
- 2) Requires these features to be activated, maintained, and available at all times of the day.
- 3) Directs Caltrans to install touch-free APS on new signalized pedestrian crossings on the state highways system and to consider installing touch-free APS when conducting maintenance and repair projects.
- 4) Adds touch-free APS installation to the existing requirements for the installation of LPIs during the first placement of or maintenance of state-owned or operated traffic signals in specified locations.
- 5) Requires Caltrans to catalogue existing state-owned or -operated traffic signals located in specified areas to be identified and recorded in the Caltrans Management System inventory database.
- 6) Allows unsignalized pedestrian crossings at signalized intersections, including, but not limited to, intersections with free-right turns, to remain unsignalized.
- 7) Creates a state-local mandate.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires Caltrans to maintain appropriate signs, signals, and other traffic control devices on both state highways and, with the consent of local authorities, maintain city streets and county roads. (Vehicle Code Section (VEH) 21350.
- 2) Specifies when Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) must be installed, including during the first placement or replacement of a state-owned or operated traffic actuated signal and when maintenance work is done at a signalized intersection in a residential district, business district, business activity district, safety corridor, school zone, or an area with a high concentration of pedestrians and cyclists. (VEH 21450.5)

- 3) Defines an “accessible pedestrian signal and detector” as an integrated device that communicates information about the “WALK” and “DON’T WALK” intervals at signalized intersections in nonvisual formats, including audible tones, speech messages, and vibrotactile surfaces, to pedestrians who are blind or have low vision. (VEH 21450.5)
- 4) Defines a “leading pedestrian interval” as an official traffic control signal that advances the “WALK” signal for three to seven seconds while the red signal halting traffic continues to be displayed on parallel through or turning traffic. (VEH 21450.5)

FISCAL EFFECT: Pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

COMMENTS: An APS is an integrated device that communicates information about the “Walk” and “Don’t Walk” intervals at signalized intersections in non-visual formats like audible tones and viobractile surfaces for pedestrians who are blind or have low vision. Since 2011, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) has required APS provide both audible and vibrotactile surfaces. The MUTCD provides uniform standards and specifications for all official traffic control devices in California. It is largely based on the federal MUTCD, which sets national standards to inform uniformity across the country. Non-compliance with the MUTCD can result in a loss of federal funding.

In 2020, out of fear of the COVID-19 virus, Santa Clara installed California’s first touch free APS crossing the street to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. The APS devices were activated by waiving your hand in front of them instead of touching the device. Caltrans expedited their use as a pilot within two months.

This bill codifies Caltrans’ existing policies on the installation of APS. Caltrans initially established the requirement that touch-free APS must be installed and activated at signalized pedestrian crossings on the state highway system as a public health safety enhancement to minimize the spread of contact-related pathogens in June of 2021. The policy encompassed new signalized pedestrian crossings and all pedestrian signals in the nearby vicinity of a new installation.

According to the author. “For individuals with visual impairments, crossing busy intersections can present daunting challenges. APS enables Californians with vision loss to know when they can safely cross the street by translating the warning lights into audio information. Accessible pedestrian signals are activated by holding the push button for 3-5 seconds and providing auditory, visual, and vibrotactile cues indicating when it’s safe to cross the street. These signals empower individuals with visual impairments to navigate intersections independently, enhancing their safety and promoting greater independence in their everyday lives. This bill would codify into state law: ‘Where stated-owned or operated, traffic-actuated signals and pedestrian hybrid beacons with pedestrian signal heads are provided at crosswalks, the walk indication and other visual signals, such as leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs) and countdown pedestrian signals. All pedestrian signal heads shall have an accessible pedestrian signal (APS) pushbutton or touch-free APS that activates WALK and DON’T WALK intervals and other visual signals at signalized intersections in non-visual formats, including audible tones, speech messages, and vibrotactile surfaces, complying with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which specifies where these devices are to be located, the accessibility features they are to

possess, and how they function. The accessible features that are required by the MUTCD shall be installed, activated, maintained, and available at all times of the day.”

California Council for the Blind, *the sponsor of this bill*, argues “It is estimated that each day close to 1.3 million Californians with significant vision loss cross the street, more than 1 hundred thousand of which are considered legally blind. As our population ages, vision loss is becoming more and more common. Many older adults have trouble living independently because of orientation and mobility challenges. For individuals with visual impairments, crossing busy intersections can present such daunting challenges. APS enable Californians with vision loss to know when they can safely cross the street by translating the warning lights into audio information. Accessible pedestrian signals are activated by holding down the push button for 3-5 seconds, after which they provide auditory, visual, and vibrotactile cues that indicate when it’s safe to cross the street. These signals empower individuals with visual impairments to navigate intersections independently, enhance their safety and promote greater independence in their everyday lives. This bill would codify existing policies of the California Department of Transportation specifying that when a signal owned or operated by Caltrans is being repaired, replaced, or newly installed, the signal must contain an accessible pedestrian signal. Since the bill only requires accessible pedestrian signals to be installed under the same policies already in effect, SB671 would not require the allocation of additional funding, nor does it cause any financial hardship on behalf of local counties or cities.”

Previous legislation. AB 2264 (Bloom), Chapter 496, Statutes of 2022 required installation and maintenance of traffic-actuated signals with leading pedestrian intervals.

SB 672 (Fuller), Chapter 432, Statutes of 2017 extended requirement of cities and counties, upon first placement of a traffic-actuated signal or replacement of the loop detector of a traffic-actuated signal, to install those signals that detect motorcycle and bicycle traffic on the roadway indefinitely.

AB 1581 (Fuller), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2007 required cities and counties, upon first placement of a traffic-actuated signal or replacement of the loop detector of a traffic-actuated signal, to install those signals that detect motorcycle and bicycle traffic on the roadway, until January 1, 2018.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Council of the Blind
California Disability Services Association
California Long Term Care Ombudsman Association
California State Council on Developmental Disabilities
County of Santa Clara
Disability Rights California
Streets for All

Opposition

None on file

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