
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 78
Author: Seyarto (R), et al.
Amended: 9/2/25
Vote: 21

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: 15-0, 4/8/25

AYES: Cortese, Strickland, Archuleta, Arreguín, Blakespear, Cervantes, Dahle, Gonzalez, Grayson, Limón, Menjivar, Richardson, Seyarto, Umberg, Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25

AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0, 5/29/25

AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Limón, Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 9/8/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Department of Transportation: report: state highway system: safety enhancements

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to prepare and submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2027 that evaluates current efforts and potential opportunities to streamline the processes and procedures for the delivery of safety enhancement projects on the state highway system.

Assembly Amendments of 9/2/25 recast provisions of the Caltrans study on safety enhancements to include recommendations for enhancing interagency coordination and procurement strategies, an evaluation of the use and feasibility of alternative project delivery methods, and an assessment of whether Caltrans has sufficient statutory authority to effectively these methods.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways (Streets & Highways Code (SHC) §91)
- 2) Establishes the California Traffic Safety Program (OTS), which consists of a comprehensive plan in conformity with the laws of this state to reduce traffic accidents and deaths, injuries, and property damage resulting from accidents. (Vehicle Code (VEH) §2900)
- 3) Requires OTS to provide a detailed presentation and a statement concerning the progress made in implementing the program and recommendations concerning possible legislative action deemed necessary or desirable to implement the program. (VEH §2905)

This bill:

- 1) Requires Caltrans to prepare a report to the Legislature containing the following:
 - a) A review of factors that affect the timing of safety enhancement projects.
 - b) An evaluation of, and Caltrans' statutory authority to utilize, alternative project delivery methods such as design-build, progressive design-build, job order contracting, and construction manager/general contractor, and other innovative approaches.
 - c) Recommendations for enhancing interagency coordination and procurement strategies to streamline delivery of safety enhancement projects.
 - d) A summary of existing and planned department initiatives to streamline the delivery of safety enhancements.
- 2) Requires the report be used as an informational source and be based on available data.

- 3) Prohibits the report from including project-specific findings, imply causality between delivery timelines and safety outcomes, or create a new duty, right, or standard of care for Caltrans.

Comments

- 1) *Purpose of this bill.* According to the author, “By prioritizing safety enhancements in high-risk areas, this bill will reduce the rising toll of traffic fatalities. We need to pay attention to the parts of our highway system that chronically cause serious accidents and ensure they are addressed for the safety of our constituents. California’s future depends on its ability to build and maintain a safe and reliable transportation network. By investing in delayed infrastructure projects, protecting consumers, and prioritizing road safety, we can ensure a better quality of life for all Californians while addressing long-standing challenges.”
- 2) *Traffic safety in California.* Despite the general decrease in driving during the COVID-19 pandemic, traffic crashes and fatalities actually increased. According to OTS, traffic fatalities increased approximately 7.6% from 3,980 in 2020 to 4,285 in 2021. The increase of traffic fatalities in recent years led to the creation of the Vision Zero Network, a collaborative nonprofit campaign with the goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. Today, more than 40 communities (including at least 13 in California) across the country have joined the Vision Zero Network.
- 3) *Safe Systems.* In 2022, Caltrans issued a Director’s Policy on Road Safety (DP-36) that committed the department to a Safe System approach and reaffirmed the vision of reaching zero fatalities and serious injuries on state highways by 2050. Under the Safe System approach, Caltrans focuses on five elements: safe road users, safe roads, safe speeds, safe vehicles, and post-crash care. As part of the policy, Caltrans committed to prioritizing safety in highway planning, operation, construction, and maintenance, to focus on eliminating the most serious crashes rather than all crashes, and eliminating disparities in road safety outcomes.
- 4) *Calmer roads.* One key element of the Safe Systems approach is speed management to ensure that vehicles are traveling at safe speeds on the highways. One approach is to include features along the roadway itself that encourage drivers to maintain a safer speed. These traffic calming devices include things like vehicle speed feedback signs, road markings that create the

impression of reducing spacing on the road to encourage slower speeds, improved crosswalks and pedestrian signage, roundabouts, intersection barriers, road diets, curb bulbous, and speed humps. Caltrans' guide on traffic calming states that traffic calming strategies should be given increased consideration along safety corridors or roadway segments with a high percentage of speed-related collisions.

- 5) *Delays in road infrastructure.* The process by which improvements on the State Highway System are planned is very forward-looking, but also very protracted. The Transportation Asset Management Plan is the strategic plan Caltrans produces every two years that assesses the state of the physical assets on the national and state highway systems. This information, along with information from Caltrans' policy documents, is used to create the State Highways System Management (SHSMP) plan which is an operational plan that includes all major physical assets and deficiencies on the state highway system. The targets set in that plan then are used to establish the set of projects in the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), which is the state's "fix-it-first" program that funds the repair, preservation, and safety improvements on the state highway system. As such, the SHOPP and the projects Caltrans will be working on for the next four years are actually based on the SHSMP from five years prior. Policy changes, like implementation of the Safe System approach, can take a long time to have an impact.

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 936 (Seyarto, 2024) – Would have required Caltrans to complete a study identifying the 15 locations on the state highway system with the highest rates of vehicle collisions and to propose projects to improve road safety at each of these locations by January 1, 2026.

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

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- The scope of the report this bill is broad, and Caltrans will face significant new analytical and administrative work to produce it. Costs will likely be in the low- to high hundreds of thousands of dollars (special fund) over the period it takes Caltrans to produce the report.
- Caltrans anticipates one-time costs of approximately \$543,000 to produce the report. According to Caltrans, this amount covers 1.25 personnel years at

an approximate cost \$243,000, as well as, if needed, \$300,000 for a contract with an outside consultant.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/3/25)

Associated General Contractors of California
Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
Associated General Contractors-san Diego Chapter
California Asphalt Pavement Association
California Trucking Association
Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce
CSAC
League of California Cities
Ontario; City of
Streets for All

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/3/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: Associated General Contractors, California Chapters writes, "[s]afety is paramount on California's transportation system. AGC strongly supports initiatives aimed at reducing vehicle collisions on the State Highway System. This study presents a valuable opportunity to identify and develop safety projects to address these risks effectively. Furthermore, by examining delays in project delivery would inform additional opportunities for streamlined project delivery."

Ayes: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Noes:

No Vote Recorded: Irwin, Lee, Nguyen

Prepared by: Isabelle LaSalle / TRANS. / (916) 651-4121
9/8/25 19:36:11

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