



THE OFFICE OF SENATE MAJORITY WHIP

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SENATOR 33RD SENATE DISTRICT

SB 695 (Gonzalez) California State Highway Transparency Act

SUMMARY

Senate Bill (SB) 695, the State Highway System Transparency Act, requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to collect, and make available to the public, historical data detailing roadway expansions of the state highway system (SHS) for the past five years.

Additionally, the bill requires Caltrans to report this data every year going forward. The data must include descriptions of lane miles added to the SHS, what purpose the miles serve, and features included in the project, such as complete streets and transit.

Finally, SB 695 requires Caltrans to report on the “project pipeline” of planned and pending projects on the SHS.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law requires Caltrans to plan, construct, and maintain the SHS based on an asset management plan.

Existing law requires the California Transportation Commission to provide oversight of the work done on the SHS, including the programming and funding of projects. The Commission is also required to produce an annual report to the Legislature that highlights budget allocations, ongoing work to enhance equity in transportation, planning policies and guidelines, and legislative recommendations.

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

The SHS is comprised of nearly 50,000 lane miles owned and managed by Caltrans, provides mobility to millions of Californians, and serves as a major lifeline for goods movement, shepherding billions of dollars of products throughout the state every year. State highways also serve as a main thoroughfare in many areas, especially rural parts of the state, while providing biking and walking opportunities for residents.

As our highways become more congested, research has shown that we cannot simply build our way out of the problem. Adding capacity through new lanes or interchanges often induces more people to drive creating additional vehicle miles travelled, which contributes to increased emissions and climate impacts. Moreover, historically, the build out of our state’s highways has disproportionately impacted communities of color, separating neighborhoods and increasing exposure to air pollution from cars and trucks, roadway noise, and safety concerns.

As a state, we continue to work to better align our transportation planning and project decisions with our climate and equity goals, while increasing safety and mobility. However, a full range of transportation investment data is not currently available to lawmakers, stakeholders, researchers, and communities. Balancing these concerns requires a better understanding, through detailed data on recent projects that have added capacity to the SHS and what planned capacity projects are in the pipeline.

SOLUTION

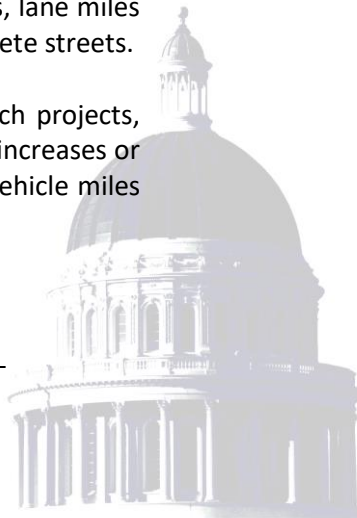
The California State Highway Transparency Act will provide an initial and ongoing set of data and detailed information on SHS investments to allow the public to better understand the pattern and types of projects moving through the state development pipeline. This new transparency will provide lawmakers, stakeholders, and communities with critical information needed to make fact-based decisions about state and local transportation policy and funding priorities.

Specifically, SB 695 requires Caltrans to collect and make available to the public historical data detailing roadway expansions on the SHS for the last five years, and to report this data every year going forward. Examples of the data sought include new lane miles added to the system by type, purpose of individual projects, lane miles converted to special lanes, and miles of complete streets.

In addition, to understand the impacts of such projects, the bill requires data on the quantification of increases or decreases of greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles travelled.

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