

Date of Hearing: April 17, 2017

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 1633 (Frazier) – As Amended March 21, 2017

**SUBJECT:** State highways: exit information signs

**SUMMARY:** Adds "electric vehicle charging facilities" to the list of services eligible for signage under the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans') Business Logo Sign Program.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Directs Caltrans to adopt rules and regulations for its Business Logo Sign Program. The program allows the placement of signs near freeways identifying the presence of specific roadside businesses offering fuel, food, lodging, camping services, approved 24-hour pharmacy services, or specific approved attractions, under the following conditions:
  - a) All business applicants must have equal access to the program; and,
  - b) Caltrans is generally prohibited from placing business logo signs within urban areas designated by the United State Bureau of Census as having a population of 5,000 or more.
- 2) Prohibits the removal of business logo signs placed before January 1, 2003, due solely to population growth in an urban area that results in a population of 5,000 or more but less than 10,000.
- 3) Provides that only official traffic control devices that conform to the uniform standards and specifications promulgated by Caltrans may be placed on a street or highway. In promulgating the regulations, Caltrans is required to consult with local authorities and other specific entities.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** In California, any device that guides, warns, or regulates motorists on a public street or highway must conform to standards promulgated by Caltrans and identified in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (California MUTCD). Development of the standards in the California MUTCD is guided by federal standards contained in the National MUTCD. Changes to the California MUTCD are subject to review and approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and must be found by FHWA to be "in substantial compliance" with the National MUTCD.

The California MUTCD sets forth a General Service Sign Program. General services signs are white-on-blue signs and are intended to guide motorists to services that are not readily apparent to the driver. A typical general service sign is square and display an icon, such a telephone receiver to indicate access to telephone services or a gas pump to indicate access to a gas station. General services signs do not indicate the specific name of the business offering the service

identified. The California MUTCD authorizes general service signs to direct motorists to electric vehicle charging stations.

The California MUTCD also authorizes a Business Logo Sign Program. This program was originally created to provide motorists with information regarding specific roadside businesses offering fuel, food, lodging, or camping services alongside Interstate 5. The program was later expanded to rural areas more generally. Implementing regulations promulgated by Caltrans, and set forth in the California MUTCD, identify criteria businesses must meet to be included in the program. For example, gas stations must meet the following criteria:

- 1) The business must be generally neat, clean, and have a comfortable appearance and an adequate scope of services.
- 2) The business must be located within one mile of the freeway interchange and it must provide vehicle services, including fuel, oil, tire repair, battery, and radiator water. It must also provide public restrooms, water fountains, and telephones and it must be open for a specified number of hours per day.

Business logo signs only accommodate six logos per type of service (e.g., food, gas, lodging or camping), and Caltrans does not install more than one sign per type of service. To address situations in which there are more qualified applicants than available logo spaces, Caltrans uses a specific priority system to rank applicants for the program. For example, for lodging and camping signs, Caltrans prioritizes businesses that are closest to the highway. For food and fuel signs, priority is based on a point system that values proximity to the highway and longer hours of operation. Unlike General Service Sign Program, the Business Logo Program does not include signage specific to electric vehicle charging facilities.

The author introduced this bill to facilitate the build out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and to encourage the public's transition to electric vehicles. The Governor and the Legislature have set forth ambitious goals for the wide-scale deployment of zero-emission vehicles, such as electric vehicles. To date, however, the public's acceptance of electric vehicles has been significantly hampered by what is referred to as "range anxiety." Range anxiety is worry on the part of a person driving an electric car that the battery will run out of power before the destination or a suitable charging point is reached. Range anxiety is often cited as the most important reason why many are reluctant to buy electric cars.

This bill goes beyond just identifying the presence of electric vehicle charging stations. It encourages businesses to install electric vehicle charging facilities at their location by offering additional opportunities to participate in the Business Logo Sign Program. Furthermore, Caltrans would likely establish priorities for the program, consistent with priorities for the other services within the program, that give greater deference to businesses that offer higher levels of electric vehicle charging service. As more and more electric vehicle charging stations are installed, range anxiety should diminish and acceptance of electric vehicles will potentially increase.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

California New Car Dealers Association

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Janet Dawson / TRANS. /