

Date of Hearing: March 14, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 1746 (Mark Stone) – As Amended March 9, 2016

SUBJECT: Transit buses

SUMMARY: Extends the authority to operate transit buses on highway shoulders to additional transit operators. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, the North County Transit District, the San Diego Association of Governments, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to conduct a transit bus-only program using the shoulders of certain highways.
- 2) Requires the transit entities to issue a report after two years of bus on shoulder service to the Legislature and publish on their agency website for the public. The report shall include geographic scope of the program, guidelines and requirements adopted, any highway modifications made, the costs associated with the program, and performance measures used to evaluate success of the project, such as safety, freeway operations and transit travel time reliability and savings.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, the North County Transit District, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority with various powers and duties relative to the planning and operation of public transit systems in those counties.
- 2) Authorizes the Monterey-Salinas Transit District and the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, with the approval of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Highway Patrol (CHP), to designate highway shoulders that may be used as bus-only traffic corridors during peak congestion hours.
- 3) Requires that the participating transit districts actively work with Caltrans and CHP to develop guidelines that ensure driver and vehicle safety and infrastructure integrity for the bus on shoulder program.
- 4) Requires that the guidelines for the bus on shoulder program be developed with transparency which includes the opportunity for public comment.
- 5) Requires Caltrans and participating transit districts to monitor the state of repair of the highway shoulders including needed repairs that may be attributable to the bus on shoulder program.
- 6) Requires participating transit districts to be responsible for all costs attributable to the bus on shoulder program, including repairs attributable to the operation of transit buses on the shoulders.

- 7) Specifies that the bus on shoulder program may commence as soon as guidelines are agreed to by the participating transit districts, Caltrans, and CHP.
- 8) Defines a "highway" for the purposes of this bill as including a "freeway."
- 9) Authorizes the operation of a transit bus on the shoulder of a state highway in conjunction with the implementation of the bus on shoulder program within the areas served by Monterey-Salinas Transit District and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: This bill would expand the number of transit entities authorized to operate a bus on shoulder program in California. Previous legislation, AB 946 (Stone), Chapter 426, Statutes of 2013, authorized a bus on shoulder program specifically for Monterey-Salinas Transit District and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District. To date, these agencies have not initiated a bus on shoulder program due to a lack of resources for planning and evaluating potential projects. According to Monterey-Salinas Transit District, they anticipate initiating a feasibility study this summer. Expanding the amount of transit agencies that, with the approval of Caltrans and CHP, can utilize a bus on shoulder option will help demonstrate the concept in different metropolitan regions of California. In fact, the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, in writing in support of the bill, noted that the Contra Costa Transportation Authority completed an I-680 Transit Investment and Congestion Relief Study and one of the recommendations of the study is a bus on shoulder transit service along the corridor to link the Martinez Amtrak station with BART, Bishop Ranch and ACE Train service in Pleasanton.

As noted by the author, as traffic congestion continues to be a critical issue for the state's transit systems and funding is limited, agencies are looking for low-cost, safe, and innovative ways to improve ridership and provide good, reliable service for their customers. Expanding the program to an additional three major metropolitan areas could help demonstrate the concept and identify any problems or concerns.

Overall, a number of bus on shoulder programs have been implemented throughout the country and these programs have been successful in shortening commute times and increasing transit ridership without increasing the number of collisions. In fact, in 2006, the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) conducted a comprehensive study which examined jurisdictions that allow buses to use highway shoulders. The study concluded that bus on shoulder programs have been proven successful but that success has largely resulted from tailoring the programs to the corridors where they will be used. The study specifically pointed out that transit, highway, and safety agencies must partner together to produce safe and effective programs. Additionally, in 2012, TCRP developed a guide for implementing bus on shoulder programs, which included operating, design and traffic guidelines.

In California, SANDAG conducted successful bus on shoulder demonstration program in partnership with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, Caltrans, and CHP in 2005. According to SANDAG, the bus on shoulder program achieved positive results for the region, especially for bus travel time and reliability that remains a top concern for transit riders. In fact, an October 2007 Technical Report issued jointly by Caltrans and SANDAG noted that a time savings of one mile per minute was realized over four mile section of highway, which would

equate to an annually operational savings of \$13,000 for the transit operator. Overall, the Caltrans – SANDAG report noted that the demonstration project was successful, yielding positive results with strong benefits for transit operations, receiving positive perceptions of transit drivers and transit passengers, while maintaining safety on the highway.

Caltrans and CHP worked with SANDAG on the bus on shoulder demonstration program in San Diego. This bill retains the provisions from AB 946 (Stone), to require Caltrans and CHP to review and approve any new bus on shoulder program and develop guidelines for the specific areas to ensure that safety, operation, and integrity of highway facilities are maintained, including the continued priority use of highway shoulders for emergencies and traffic law enforcement.

This bill also requires a report be developed by the local transit entity, in conjunction with Caltrans and CHP, after two years of operating a bus on shoulder program in their jurisdiction. The reports will be submitted to the Legislature and posted on the transit entity's website to help keep the Legislature, other transit entities, and the traveling public informed of the outcomes of this new program.

Previous legislation: AB 946 (Stone), Chapter 426, Statutes of 2013, authorized Monterey-Salinas Transit District and Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District to operate a bus on the shoulder program with approval from Caltrans and CHP.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (Sponsor)
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District
California Transit Association
Central Contra Costa Transit Authority
Monterey-Salinas Transit
North County Transit District

Opposition

None on file

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