

Date of Hearing: April 1, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

AB 2719 (Wilson) – As Introduced February 14, 2024

SUBJECT: Vehicles: commercial vehicle inspections

SUMMARY: Authorizes a public transit agency to request the California Highway Patrol (CHP) conduct an annual inspection of its fleet and certify it meets CHP's minimum safety standards. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes CHP to issue stickers or other devices as evidence that a commercial vehicle or transit vehicle has been inspected and certified to be in compliance with minimum safety standards.
- 2) Exempts a transit vehicle that has been inspected by CHP and is displaying a sticker or other device to not stop at a commercial vehicle inspection site run by CHP.
- 3) Defines public transit agency to be a State Transit Assistance eligible operator and a transit vehicle to mean a vehicle which is used for public transportation service and which carries more than ten persons, including the driver.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires every driver of a commercial vehicle to stop and submit the vehicle to an inspection of the vehicle's size, weight, equipment, loading, and smoke emissions, as well as the driver's license, medical qualifications, and hours-of-service compliance of a driver of the vehicle at any location where members of the CHP are conducting inspections of commercial vehicles and when signs are displayed requiring the stop. (Vehicle Code (VEH) 2813)
- 2) Defines a "commercial vehicle" as a motor vehicle of a type required to be registered under this code used or maintained for the transportation of persons for hire, compensation, or profit or designed, used, or maintained primarily for the transportation of property, with certain exemptions. (VEH 260)
- 3) Makes it a misdemeanor if a driver of a vehicle does not stop and submit the vehicle to an inspection when signs are displayed requiring that stop. (VEH 2813)
- 4) Requires CHP to inspect every schoolbus, school public activity bus and youth bus once a year and authorizes CHP to charge youth buses a fee for the inspection. (VEH 2807, 2807.1 and 2807.3)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

The CHP operates Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facilities (CVEF) across the state to inspect the weight of trucks and commercial vehicles and provide safety inspections. In late 2020, CHP began to require public transit and commuter buses to be inspected at CVEFs that had facilities to hold passengers, including the Eastbound Cordelia CVEF, the Gilroy

Northbound CVEF, and the Mountain Pass CVEF. As a result of this requirement, transit buses being operated by Solano County Transit (SolTrans) and Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVRTA) have been subject to inspections while passing the Cordelia Station, impacting the ability of these transit agencies to provide on-time service connecting commuters in Solano and Napa Valley with the greater Bay Area region.

According to the author, “We have to promote all modes of transportation if our state wants to meet its climate goals. Reliable, on-time transit is key to improving the rider experience and encouraging mode shift towards transit vehicles. Unfortunately, transit riders taking advantage of routes along I-80 may be subject to significant delays if a transit vehicle is required to stop at the Cordelia Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facility. This bill will help improve the transit experience by requiring CHP to inspect transit vehicles on site instead of random stops at commercial vehicle enforcement facilities. This change will help transit agencies operate on time without sacrificing the vehicle’s safety on the road.”

Failing to provide frequent service can lead to high transit dissatisfaction and decreased ridership. Transit Center conducted a survey of 3,000 transit riders across 17 regions in the state. According to their report, *Who’s On Board 2016*,” frequency of service and travel time display are the two factors resulting in the largest gaps in satisfaction between transit promoters and detractors, and transit detractors give them the lowest rating out of all service attributes. They are closely followed in importance by stop/station conditions, “next bus” information, and reliability.

To put it simply: What makes an unhappy transit rider? Transit service that is infrequent, slow, and unreliable, and transit stops that lack shelter and information. Addressing these deficiencies should be at the top of agencies’ to-do lists.”

SolTrans, a co-sponsor of this bill, argues “In late 2020 the CHP began to require public transit and commuter buses that operate on certain segments of the highway system that include CVEF to pull into the facility for a safety inspection. This policy, which excludes school buses, currently impacts public transit and commuter buses operated by three public transit agencies – SolTrans, NVRTA as their buses pass the Cordelia Eastbound CVEF, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) as their buses pass the Gilroy Northbound CVEF- and creates service delays that reduce the on-time performance and reliability of these services and results in missed connections with other regional transit services.

By enacting these changes, the Legislature would signal the importance of transit service to communities across the state and further demonstrate its commitment to support transit agencies in their recovery.”

SolTrans buses were stopped 34 times from 2022 to 2023. The longest inspection lasted 58 minutes and no issues were found. The average of the stops lasted a half hour. SolTrans and NVRTA have expressed concerns that these delays may increase in frequency once CHP opens a new eastbound CVEF on the I-80 corridor. VTA has had a different experience with CHP at the Gilroy CVEF. VTA has been given the authority to have 18 of its buses inspected every three months on VTA’s schedule to avoid being stopped during a transit route. VTA would potentially run the risk of being stopped at the Gilroy CVEF if VTA were forced to use a bus not inspected during those 18 months. This bill would create a process to allow CHP to inspect and certify transit vehicles every year and bypass the requirement to stop at a CVEF while on their routes so long as the vehicle displayed a sticker indicating it was inspected by CHP.

Several bus routes operated by SolTrans and NVRTA are currently impacted by the potential of being stopped by CHP at the Cordelia CVEF off Interstate 80. Impacted routes include the NVRTA line from Napa and Napa Valley College to the Capitol Corridor Amtrak station in Fairfield, as well as SolTrans lines connecting the University of California, Davis to Vacaville, Fairfield, Benicia, and Walnut Creek BART Station; as well as two SolTrans lines connecting Fairfield and Vallejo to Richmond BART stations. The SolTrans lines impacted by these inspections have a yearly ridership of over 400,000.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the first half of 2020, transit ridership plunged from 50% to as much as 94%. In efforts to stave off financial losses from declining transit ridership, the federal government provided relief for transit operators across the country. In March 2020, Congress passed and the President signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provided \$25 billion in relief to transit agencies. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 added \$14 billion in transit relief. The American Rescue Plan in March of 2021 provided an additional \$30.5 billion.

Transit ridership has improved since 2020, but is still far below January 2020 levels. In January of 2021, transit ridership nationally was at 48% of what it was before the pandemic. By March of 2024; national ridership has returned to 79% of where it was pre-pandemic. The Pacific region of the United States has seen a smaller return to transit ridership than national trends, with ridership hovering at 76% of where it was pre-pandemic.

Declining public transit use is problematic if the State is going to meet its climate change goals. In California, the transportation sector is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and is responsible for about 40 percent of the state's emissions with light-duty passenger vehicles being the single largest contributor. The Legislature has set several goals to reduce greenhouse (GHG) emissions and address climate change. The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 [AB 32 (Nunez), Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006] and subsequent companion legislation SB 32 (Pavley), Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016, requires California to reduce statewide GHG emissions to 40% below the 1990 level by 2030.

Reducing the number of miles that people drive every day can have a significant impact on reducing GHG emissions. Providing alternative modes of transportation such as public transportation using buses and light rail or other shared ride approaches could significantly reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in California.

California has targeted a 15% reduction in VMT by 2050 as part of its larger strategy to reduce GHG emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Napa Valley Transportation Agency (co-sponsor)
Solano County Transit (SolTrans) (co-sponsor)
Streets for All

Opposition

None on file

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