

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
Lori D. Wilson, Chair  
AB 954 (Bennett) – As Introduced February 20, 2025

**SUBJECT:** State transportation improvement program: bicycle highway pilot program

**SUMMARY:** Requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to prepare a pilot program proposal which establishes branded networks of bicycle highways within two of California's major metropolitan areas in different regions of the state, and requires the proposal be included in the draft interregional transportation improvement program (ITIP). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Restricts the pilot proposal to a network for bicyclists with intermittent entrances and exits that serves trips of five miles or more, and supports travel speeds of up to 25 miles per hour.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to select the sites for the pilot program based on regional support, connectivity to other bike routes, and potential to maximize active transportation and its associated benefits.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to include the proposal in the draft ITIP on or before January 1, 2030.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to perform all other actions necessary for the proposal to be programmed in the state transportation improvement program (STIP), including, but not limited to, developing a project study report or major investment study.
- 5) Requires Caltrans to report to the relevant policy committees of the Legislature on the status of the pilot program and recommendations for the development of additional networks of bicycle highways on or before July 1, 2031.
- 6) Establishes the policy inoperative on July 1, 2035, and sets a repeal date of January 1, 2036.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Specifies that the ITIP fund projects that improve interregional movement for people and goods throughout California on the State Highway System (SHS) and develop Intercity Passenger Rail corridors of strategic importance. (Government Code Section (GOV) 14526)
- 2) Requires projects included in the draft ITIP be consistent with the adopted regional transportation plan and the STIP. (GOV 14526)
- 3) Requires Caltrans to prepare and submit to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) an interregional transportation strategic plan directed at achieving a high functioning and balanced interregional transportation system, and requires the interregional transportation strategic plan be consistent with the California Transportation Plan. (GOV 14524.4)

- 4) Requires ITIP to be programmed in the following categories:
  - a) 25% for interregional improvements, including transportation improvement projects such as state highway, intercity passenger rail, mass transit guideway, or grade separation projects;
  - b) 75% for regional improvements, including transportation improvement projects that are needed to improve transportation within the region, such as state highways, local roads, public transit, intercity rail, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, and grade separation, transportation system management, transportation demand management, soundwall projects, intermodal facilities, safety, and providing funds to match federal funds;
  - c) At least 60% to be programmed to projects outside urbanized areas on the Interregional Road System (IRRS) and intercity passenger rail;
  - d) Of this amount, at least 15% (9% of the ITIP) must be programmed for intercity passenger rail projects, including grade separation projects; and,
  - e) The projects funded by the ITIP may include state highway, intercity passenger rail, mass transit guideway, or grade separation projects. (Streets and Highways Code Section (SHC) 164)
- 5) Requires Caltrans and local agencies to develop design criteria and symbols for signs, markers, and traffic control devices for bikeways and roadways where bicycle travel is permitted. (SHC 890.6 - 890.8)
- 6) Defines a “bikeway” as a facility that is provided primarily for bicycle travel. (SHC 890.4)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** A bike highway is a high-quality, continuous, long-distance bikeway that reduces barriers to destinations that people want to travel to and from, especially in places which may normally be difficult to bike to. Bike highways may consist of a mix of on-street facilities and fully-separated trails.

The California State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Toward an Active California, includes a strategy to define and implement “bicycle highways” that separate bicyclists from both motor traffic and pedestrians, bicycle-specific interchanges that minimize the need for stopping, and wider bikeways that allow passing. Based on experiences in other countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, bike highways can support longer distance commuting, increase the number and types of trips that can be made by bicycle, and encourage more people to bike by providing greater separation from other modes of travel.

In California, low-speed electric bikes, or e-bikes, are permitted on bicycle facilities, unless expressly prohibited by a local jurisdiction. In recent years, e-bikes have become increasingly affordable and accessible. They also have the potential to increase the distance and terrain most people can comfortably travel by bike for commuting. Planning for intercity bicycle highways should consider and accommodate trips by people using e-bikes and other electric-assist mobility devices.

In June 2022, Caltrans released a Bay Area Bike Highway Study that identifies feasible opportunities to add these corridors and incorporate best practices most suitable for the Bay Area region. Caltrans evaluated bike highways parallel to state highway corridors. The study builds off of the recommendations included in the 2018 Caltrans District 4 Bike Plan and the 2017 California State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, *Toward an Active California*.

The Bay Area Bike Plan found 50-60% of cyclists surveyed were “interested but concerned bicyclists” who prefer separation or low speed shared streets that prioritize biking and walking.

With Caltrans’ endorsement of National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guidance and Caltrans design guidance on separated bikeways, there are new opportunities to develop visions and plans that include bicycling as a viable option on state highways.

*Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan (ITSP) and ITIP*. Caltrans updates the ITSP every five years. The ITSP is a statewide plan that guides investment along California’s 11 strategic interregional corridors.

The ITSP aligns with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP 2050), California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP), and the California State Rail Plan (CSRP). It also establishes criteria for prioritizing transportation investments that safely move people and goods between regions. The ITSP provides direction to programs, districts, and partner agencies on the policies and strategies that should be considered when assessing the interregional transportation system and identifying improvements.

Some of the evaluation criteria provided in the ITSP includes: How does the project impact single occupancy vehicle miles traveled (VMT)? Does the project minimize the impact on natural resources and ecosystems? Does the project demonstrate potential for interregional travel mode shift, including to rail, transit, or active transportation?

The ITSP provides policy direction for Caltrans development of the ITIP. Projects included in the ITIP complement transportation improvements made within the state’s urbanized areas funded by regional transportation improvement programs and other locally controlled funds. Every two years Caltrans submits the ITSP to the CTC for approval and funding allocation.

Specifically, CAPTI outlines an action related to the ITIP as follows; “Fast Track New CAPTI-Aligned Projects in Early Planning Phases by adding them to the ITIP”. This action directs Caltrans to foster and develop a strong pipeline of innovative, sustainable transportation solutions, fast track the development of new ITIP projects in early planning phases that are in alignment with the investment framework and the revised Caltrans’ corridor planning process. While existing ITIP commitments will continue to be funded, new ITIP projects will undergo an expedited project development process that will be completed in collaboration with local and regional partners. These new projects will be prioritized for a portion of new and future funding capacity in the ITIP when such funds are available, while balancing the need to complete currently programmed ITIP projects.

The 2024 ITIP estimates \$3.12 million is available for new project capacity. When considering projects for the 2024 ITIP, the following factors are used to prioritize projects for funding: project cost, currently programmed ITIP projects that need funding to complete remaining phases, 2021 ITSP Evaluation Criteria for new ITIP Projects, prioritizing new projects consistent

with the 2021 ITSP and the CAPTI framework, and prioritizing projects that have a significant impact at the state level, including rail infrastructure and improvements to Highway 99, recognizing their vital role in regional and statewide transportation networks.

Present forecasting methodology estimates an average STIP cycle may add up to \$1.4 billion of new money. Every new STIP cycle adds two new years of programming capacity. With 25% of new revenues going to the interregional program, the 2026 ITIP can expect to see new programming capacity of about \$350 million over two years or about \$175 million per year for the future STIP cycles. Although there have been fluctuations in STIP and ITIP funding the last two cycles, the 2026 STIP cycle expects to have normal levels of funding capacity which will allow the programming of new projects and phases in the next ITIP cycle.

*Regional priority.* The author of this bill represents, among other localities, Ventura County. The Ventura County Transportation Commission Strategic Plan identifies strategies to, “encourage city and county partners to plan and prioritize building new bike lanes...” and “establish an advisory committee and work with partner agencies to implement the signage strategies in the Bicycle Wayfinding Plan.”

This bill ensures a network of bicycle lanes would be eligible to be included in the regional share of the state transportation improvement program. Considering the guiding documents which inform the ITIP and the statutory requirements that ITIP fund regional improvements including pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, this bill seems to align regional and state goals by creating a pilot program for bicycle highways within the ITIP.

*According to the author,* “Cycling is one of the cleanest and least expensive methods of transportation. However, the state needs to do more to ensure that cyclists feel safe and secure in their transportation choices. The standardization of signage and lane markers is the first step in the overall establishment of bicycle highways, and this simple first step will give cyclists the confidence to use these lanes with greater and greater frequency.”

*In support,* PeopleForBikes writes, “These bills each provide an innovative and effective solution to expand the transportation system holistically to meet the needs of all Californians. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure costs significantly less to build yet reaps immense benefits, indicating a powerful return on investment. These benefits include: reduced health care costs from increased levels of physical activity and reduced traffic crashes, improved transportation justice and economic mobility from accessibility to an equitable form of transportation, and increased retail and tourism revenue that promotes thriving local economies.”

*Previous legislation.* SB 960 (Wiener), Chapter 630, Statutes of 2024 requires, to the extent feasible that facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists be provided and improved on all SHOPP projects. The bill is pending before the Assembly Transportation Committee.

AB 2438 (Friedman) of 2022 would have required various state transportation programs to incorporate strategies from the CAPTI into program guidelines. Also would have required various state agencies to establish new transparency and accountability guidelines for certain transportation funding programs. *This bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.*

AB 1147 (Friedman) of 2021 among other provisions, would have required the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop a guidance document to provide best practices for establishing "15-minute communities," and would have required Caltrans to develop a bicycle highway pilot program. *This bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.*

SB 127 (Wiener) of 2019 would have changed state policies for the management of the state highway system, including requiring Caltrans to incorporate new pedestrian and bicycle facilities into projects in specified areas. *This bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.*

SB 1 (Beall), Chapter 5, Statutes of 2017 increases several taxes and fees to raise the equivalent of roughly \$52.4 billion over ten years in new transportation revenues and makes adjustments for inflation every year; directed the funding to be used towards deferred maintenance on the state highways and local streets and roads, and to improve the state's trade corridors, transit, and active transportation facilities.

SB 486 (DeSaulnier), Chapter 917, Statutes of 2014 modifies processes for developing and adopting the Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) long-range transportation planning and programming documents.

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

##### **Support**

Active San Gabriel Valley  
Bike LA  
Bike Monterey  
CalBike  
California Walks  
Chico Velo  
ClimatePlan  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Marin County Bicycle Coalition  
Move LA  
Move Santa Barbara County  
NRDC  
PeopleForBikes  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates  
Safe Routes Partnership  
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition  
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition  
Shasta Living Streets  
Slow Down Sacramento  
Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition  
Streets are For Everyone  
Streets are For Everyone

Streets for All  
Sustainable Claremont  
Transbay Coalition  
Transform  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Walk Bike Cupertino

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Julia Kingsley / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093