

Date of Hearing: July 14, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

SB 800 (Reyes) – As Amended July 9, 2025

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: State overpasses: suicide prevention

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in consultation with affected local governments to determine appropriate mitigation measures for suicide deterrent infrastructure on locally owned overpasses with a history of suicide-related deaths, cross over state highways, and are in the state's right-of-way. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Mitigation measures shall include, but not be limited to, signage and barriers.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to consider technological feasibility, cost, design, and effectiveness of mitigation measures and infrastructure.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to consult with the Office of Suicide Prevention on how to prioritize implementation of mitigation measures.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to submit a report to the Legislature on findings related to assessment of appropriate mitigation measures and prioritization of implementation on or before December 1, 2026.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes Caltrans and provides that it has full possession and control of all state highways and property and rights in property acquired for state highway purposes, construct all state highways. (Streets and Highways Code Section (SHC) 90)
- 2) Establishes a duty of Caltrans to plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain transportation systems that the Legislature has made, or may make, the responsibility of the department. (Government Code Section 14030)
- 3) Requires Caltrans to install and maintain screening on state freeway overpasses to prevent objects from being dropped or thrown on vehicles passing underneath. (SHC 92.6)
- 4) Authorizes the State Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish the Office of Suicide Prevention and authorizes the office to perform certain functions including the following:
 - a) Providing information and technical assistance to statewide and regional partners regarding best practices on suicide prevention policies and programs;
 - b) Conducting state-level assessment regional and statewide suicide prevention policies and practices;
 - c) Monitoring and disseminating data to inform prevention efforts at the state and local levels;

- d) Convening experts and stakeholders, including, but not limited to, stakeholders representing populations with high rates of suicide, to encourage collaboration and coordination of resources for suicide prevention; and,
- e) Reporting on progress to reduce rates of suicide. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 131300)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, unknown, likely significant one-time costs for Caltrans to design, install, and maintain suicide deterrents on five freeway overpasses. Actual overall costs could range from the low hundreds of thousands to potentially over \$1 million, depending on the specific features that would be appropriate for each identified location. (State Highway Account)

Additional minor to moderate one-time administrative costs for Caltrans staff to coordinate with the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, and the San Bernardino County Office of Suicide Prevention to identify locations for installation of suicide deterrents, and to determine the design features at each location. (State Highway Account)

COMMENTS: Suicide is the leading cause of violent death, and self-harm is the third leading cause of injury-related emergency department visits in California, according to DPH's 2025 data brief. Men consistently have higher rates of suicide compared to women. In 2022, men accounted for more than three-fourths of deaths by self-harm. CDPH reports that 5% of the recorded suicide deaths in 2022, or approximately 213 individuals, committed suicide from falling. In 2021, data that DPH acquired from 31 participating counties identified 170 individuals who committed suicide by falling. With 21% or approximately 35 individuals committing suicide from bridges.

The Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) prepared the *Striving for Zero* report which is California's strategic plan for suicide prevention. MHSOAC states that the best practices for suicide prevention strategies include reducing access to lethal means, connecting people to social networks, building resiliency, safe reporting by the media following a suicide death, and increasing access to care.

MHSOAC's report shows the effectiveness of restricting access to lethal means in multiple countries over a wide range of interventions. The United Kingdom saw a reduction of suicides following the replacement of coal gas with natural gas. Israel adopted a policy requiring soldiers to lock their weapons in storage when on leave, reducing suicide deaths by 40%. In the US, suicide deaths associated with carbon monoxide decreased with the implementation of stricter controls on motor vehicle exhaust gas emissions. Lastly, policies that regulated the amount of certain types of prescription medication resulted in fewer suicides involving medication in several countries.

Suicide barriers can be effective. A review published in 2024 in the Journal of Preventive Medicine Reports titled, *Effectiveness of physical barriers to prevent suicide from high-risk bridges* identified that physical barriers work and are effective at reducing suicides by jumping from high-risk areas. The review also found that physical deterrent generally did not result in the substitution of a place or method. Over a longitudinal period, some areas even reduced their suicide rates to zero. Suicide barriers deter individuals who are at risk from jumping and buy additional time for intervention from bystanders and law enforcement.

Suicide deterrent infrastructure in California. In January 2024, a continuous physical suicide barrier was installed on the full length of the 1.7-mile span of the Golden Gate Bridge. Since its installation, the Golden Gate Bridge has seen a reduction of suicides by 73% and suicide attempts by 34%. The total project cost was approximately \$224 million and was funded through federal and state grants, bridge tolls, Proposition 63 monies, and individual and foundation donations.

Caltrans is currently developing a suicide deterrent system (estimated at \$124 million) for the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge (SDCBB). Although official figures have not been maintained, it is widely believed that approximately 400 deaths by suicide have occurred since opening in 1969. After the Golden Gate Bridge, SDCBB is recognized as the second most frequently used bridge for suicide in the state. The standard operating procedure for responding to suicide attempts is bridge closure. In response, interim measures to address suicide incidents was implemented by installing 4-inch spikes on top of the bridge rail in 2019. Multiple suicides and suicide attempts have occurred since, resulting in bridge closures that have heavily affected travel time for residents of San Diego County.

In addition to the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge, Caltrans is also working on installing a suicide deterrent system across the Arroyo Simi Overhead Bridge on State Route 118. More than 20 documented attempts and suicides have occurred since 1994, with a majority of incidents occurring since 2009. The project is anticipated to be completed in December 2025. The total project cost is approximately \$10 million, according to the proposed State Highway Operation and Protection Program Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Incidents and response in San Bernardino County. Since September 2024, the City of Rancho Cucamonga has experienced numerous suicides at different overpasses. There have been seven documented suicides and six attempts where law enforcement was able to intervene. In response, the City has begun to evaluate and implement suicide prevention strategies on freeway overpasses. The City initiated the permitting process with Caltrans in September 2024 to build and install signage, access fencing, and barriers on the New Haven Avenue overpass. The City is the lead sponsor of SB 800. Caltrans has approved the permits for signage and access fencing. The barrier permit is still being processed. According to the City, the barriers would add curved fencing across the full length of the bridge and would cost approximately \$175,000.

Funding for suicide deterrent infrastructure. Federal funds are available for suicide deterrents. In addition, Caltrans recommends that local agencies work with their Regional Transportation Planning Agency, County Transportation Commission, or MPOs to nominate projects for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program.

According to the author. “Last year, in my district, there were two subsequent suicides that occurred on the Haven Avenue overpass onto the 210 Freeway. While this tragedy in the City of Rancho Cucamonga has shaken the community there are steps we can take to ensure we have infrastructure to support our community and make it a safer place. This is why I have introduced SB 800 which would require Caltrans to install suicide deterrents on 10 freeway overpasses in San Bernardino County. These deterrents may include, but are not limited to, suicide prevention signage and physical barriers to prevent falls or intentional jumps that could result in death. In order to address the biggest losses, the bill prioritizes locations with the highest documented suicide rates over the past 20 years. Preventative measures like SB 800 are critical to ensuring similar situations will not occur in the future.”

Arguments in Support. The City of Rancho Cucamonga writes, “The rising number of suicide incidents from freeway overpasses is not only a profound tragedy for individuals and families but also a serious public safety concern for motorists, first responders, and the broader community. In the past six months alone, multiple suicides and attempts have occurred along the 210 Freeway overpasses, including the heartbreaking loss of two high school students at the same location – 1.5 weeks apart from one another. In December, another individual from outside the area also died by suicide at a Rancho Cucamonga overpass. While some attempts have been prevented, each represents a crisis that could have ended in another devastating loss. These incidents underscore the urgent need for intervention. No family, school, or community should have to endure such unimaginable grief. It is imperative that we take immediate action to implement preventive measures that provide hope, support, and protection for those in distress.”

Related legislation. AB 440 (Ramos of 2025) requires the State Department of Public Health, Office of Suicide Prevention, by December 31, 2027, to work with Caltrans to identify cost-effective strategies to reduce suicides and prevent suicide attempts on the state’s bridges and roadways. This bill is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Previous legislation. AB 2112 (Ramos), Chapter 142, Statutes of 2020, authorizes DPH to establish OSP to, among other functions, provide information and technical assistance to statewide and regional partners regarding best practices on suicide prevention policies and programs and conduct and convene experts and stakeholders to encourage collaboration and coordination of resources for suicide prevention.

SB 656 (Hueso), Chapter 651, Statutes of 2019 requires Caltrans to establish an advisory committee to provide public input on the installation of physical suicide deterrent systems on the San Diego-Coronado Bridge.

SB 480 (Hueso of 2017) would have required that 1% of the Department of Transportation’s (Caltrans) miscellaneous revenue be expended to fund feasibility, environmental, and engineering studies pertaining to bridge safety on the Coronado Bridge. This bill was held in Assembly Transportation Committee.

AB 755 (Ammiano), Chapter 593, Statutes of 2013 requires the planning process for the construction of a new bridge, or a bridge with a documented history of suicides, that is included in a regional transportation improvement program, interregional transportation improvement program or the state highway operation and protection program to include a document demonstrating that a suicide barrier was considered as part of the planning process.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Rancho Cucamonga (sponsor)
California Association of Psychiatric Technicians
California Hospital Association
Union of American Physicians and Dentists

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: AJ Mendiola / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093