Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Lori D. Wilson, Chair
AB 2015 (Wicks) – As Amended April 14, 2026

SUBJECT: Department of Transportation: third-party navigation applications: study and report

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in consultation with the California Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and local authorities, to conduct a comprehensive study and make recommendations on the impact of third-party navigation applications on the state highway system and local street and road networks by January 1, 2028. Specifically, **this bill**:

1) Requires the study to analyze the impact of third-party navigation applications on congestion displacement, local infrastructure impact, safety metrics and emergency response, as specified.

2) On or before January 1, 2028, requires Caltrans to submit a report to the relevant fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature the study required and a report, based on the findings of the study, that includes policy recommendations for regulatory or legislative action to improve the alignment between third party navigation applications and state and local traffic management goals.

3) The recommendations may include the following:

    a) Data-sharing requirements between third-part navigation applications and local jurisdictions.

    b) Frameworks for third-party navigation applications to respect local traffic ordinances, such as weight limits or local access only designations.

    c) Technological standards to prioritize safety and emissions reductions over marginal time savings.

EXISTING LAW:

1) Establishes Caltrans under the control of an executive officer known as the director of Transportation (Government Code Section 14001 and 14002).

2) Establishes CalSTA, which consists of the Department of the California Highway Patrol, The California Transportation Commission, the Department of Motor Vehicles, Caltrans and the Board of Pilot Commissioners) (GOV 13975).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Global Position System (GPS) became available for civilian use with limited accuracy in 1983.

The first handheld commercial GPS unit, the Magellan Nav 1000, was released in 1989. By 1991 Mazda became the first car company to factory install an in-car navigation system. By the mid-

1990s, navigation websites like Mapquest became available, providing static print out directions for drivers to navigate from one location to another. In February of 2005, Google Maps was launched as a new solution to help drivers navigate.

In 2008, the Israeli startup Waze revolutionized navigation by utilizing crowdsourced data. Unlike traditional GPS devices, Waze incorporated real-time, user-submitted travel data to optimize routing based on live traffic patterns. Google acquired Waze in 2013 for approximately $1 billion. This community-driven data model became the industry standard, enabling navigation apps to dynamically divert traffic to avoid congestion.

According to the 2025 Annual Urban Mobility Scorecard, Americans lost an average of 63 hours sitting in traffic in 2024, the highest level ever measured. That's the equivalent of nearly eight full workdays lost to traffic and marks a 16% increase in national congestion costs over the last five years, now totaling $269 billion annually.

According to *Mitigating Traffic Congestion: The Role of Intelligent Transportation* Systems, a 2020 report by the London School of Economics, providing drivers with sensible route advice through navigation apps is a successful traffic management tool with the potential to reduce traffic externalities such as congestion, air pollution, and crashes. The report finds that the use of navigation systems alone is associated with a significant decrease in unnecessary travel time and congestion costs, resulting in annual national savings of approximately 175 million hours in travel time and $4.72 billion in travel costs. Furthermore, the study suggests that the congestion-mitigating effect of these systems is enhanced as commuters increasingly utilize online traffic services and navigation applications. These findings highlight that real-time information provided by navigation tools is a highly cost-effective intervention compared to traditional physical infrastructure investments, which can sometimes paradoxically exacerbate congestion.

According to *Impact of Navigation Apps on Congestion and Spread Dynamics on a Transportation Network,* a study conducted by UC Berkeley Institute of Transportation Studies, "Our findings reveal that traffic system performance improves when 30–60% of users follow dynamic routing. The Susceptible–infected–recovered (SIR) model supports these findings, highlighting the most efficient congestion propagation-to-dissipation ratio when 40% of users adopt dynamic routing, as indicated by the lowest basic reproductive number. This research provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between navigation apps and traffic congestion, with implications for transportation planning and management."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: David Sforza / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093