

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

AB 1976 (Wicks) – As Amended April 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Streets and highways: pedestrian and bicycle facilities

SUMMARY: Limits public input for certain pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, and repeals and recasts the Pedestrian Mall Act of 1960 and exempts the development of pedestrian malls from CEQA. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits a legislative body of a city or county from holding a “community input meeting” on a proposed pedestrian or bicycle safety project for a street or highway after the project is included in an approved plan that will be implemented as part of the circulation element of a general plan.
- 2) Prohibits a legislative body of a city or county, at a public meeting where a contract is awarded for, or when staff are directed to begin, the construction of a pedestrian or bicycle safety project for a street or highway or anytime thereafter, from terminating the project unless the legislative body makes both of the following findings at a public meeting:
 - a) The preponderance of the evidence shows that the public benefit of not delivering the project outweighs the safety benefit to the community.
 - b) The preponderance of the evidence shows that the cost of the safety project cannot be funded given the budget of the county or the budget for the project.
- 3) Prohibits a legislative body of a city or county, if the body establishes a process for residents to submit a petition to request the installation of a traffic calming measure on a street or highway, from requiring the petition to contain the signatures of more than a simple majority of the total number of persons whose residences are located, in whole or in part, within 1,000 feet of the proposed traffic calming measure.
- 4) Exempts from the California Environmental Quality Act, the establishment or expansion of a pedestrian mall.
- 5) Repeals and replaces the Pedestrian Mall Law of 1960 with the Pedestrian Mall Law of 2026, defines terms and:
 - a) Authorizes a jurisdiction to establish a pedestrian mall, prohibit vehicular traffic on a pedestrian mall, make improvements to develop malls, and use general funds to finance the cost of improvements.
 - b) Requires a jurisdiction to follow notice, due process, public hearing, and signage requirements regarding the establishment of pedestrian malls.
 - c) Provides that the establishment of a pedestrian mall is consistent with the public access requirements of the California Coastal Act of 1976.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the Pedestrian Mall Act of 1960:
 - a) Defines a “street” to mean any public street, road, highway, alley, lane, court, way or place of any nature open to the use of the public (Streets and Highways (STH) Code §11004).
 - b) Defines a “pedestrian mall” to mean one or more city streets, or portions thereof, on which vehicular traffic is restricted and is to be used exclusively or primarily for pedestrian travel (STH §11006).
 - c) Defines “city” to include every county, city, and city and county within the state (STH §11005).
 - d) Authorizes the legislative body of a city to:
 - i. Establish pedestrian malls and to prohibit, in whole or in part, vehicular traffic on a pedestrian mall.
 - ii. Pay, from general funds of the city or from the proceeds of assessments levied on property benefiting by the establishment of a pedestrian mall, damages, if any, allowed or awarded to any property owner due to the establishment of a pedestrian mall.
 - iii. Construct on city streets of a pedestrian mall improvements of any kind or nature necessary or convenient to the operation a pedestrian mall, including but not limited to, paving, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, sewers, drainage works, street lighting facilities, parking areas, retaining walls, landscaping, tree planting, statuary, and fountains.
 - iv. Acquire, by gift, purchase, eminent domain or otherwise, land, real property, or rights-of-way which will become part of a city street established as a pedestrian mall (STH §§11101-11101.5).
 - e) Authorizes the legislative body of a city to adopt a resolution declaring its intent to establish a pedestrian mall and requires the resolution to contain:
 - i. A determination that the public interest and convenience require the establishment of a pedestrian mall and that vehicular traffic will not be unduly inconvenienced.
 - ii. A description of the city streets, or portions thereof, which are proposed to be established as a pedestrian mall, including the mall intersections and intersecting streets.
 - iii. A statement that the legislative body proposes to adopt an ordinance prohibiting, in whole or in part, vehicular traffic on such pedestrian mall.
 - iv. The source of funding used to pay damages, if any, to a property owner.
 - v. Notice to any person owning or having any legal or equitable interest in any real property which might suffer legal damages that they file a written claim of damages.

- vi. Information about a public hearing to consider objections to the establishment of a pedestrian mall and related due process requirements (STH §11200).
- f) Authorizes the legislative body of a city to adopt an ordinance establishing a pedestrian mall and containing, in part, rules and regulations prohibiting vehicular traffic after the above resolution has been adopted and as soon as all relevant claims and damages have been paid (STH §11600).
- g) Requires a legislative body, if the owners of lands abutting the proposed pedestrian mall representing a majority of the frontage on the proposed pedestrian mall have objected in writing to the establishment of the proposed pedestrian mall, to terminate the proceedings for such establishment for at least one year (STH §11306).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Only sections 5-10 of this bill pertaining to public participation requirements involving a bike or pedestrian pathway are germane to this committee's jurisdiction. This bill is dual referred to the Assembly Local Government Committee.*

According to the author, "While many of California's transportation laws are well-intentioned, there are a number of laws and regulations that have become overly burdensome and unnecessarily delay much-needed safety measures and improvements in transportation and pedestrian-related projects. Safety and pedestrian-related transportation projects have run into outdated regulations that discourage action, raise costs, and lead to delays. AB 1976 would update existing laws and regulations that delay projects in order to provide more streamlined processes for projects that provide additional safety measures for local communities and align with the state's climate and equity goals"

Sections 5-10 of this bill constrains a local legislative body from soliciting public input on or terminating a contract to construct a pedestrian or bicycle safety project. The bill also prohibits a local legislative body from requiring more than a simple majority of signatories from nearby residents on a petition to install a traffic calming measure. Taken together, it appears the intent is to streamline or expedite the development of these projects in the face of potential community opposition or, in the case of traffic calming measures like speedbumps, challenges associated with securing 2/3 support from nearby residents before a locality will consider installing a speedbump.

Pedestrian and bike safety projects. This bill prohibits a local legislative body from holding a "community input meeting" on a proposed pedestrian or bicycle safety project after the project is included in an approved plan that will be implemented as part of the circulation element of a general plan. This bill does not define "pedestrian or bicycle safety project" but for guidance we can refer to the California Transportation Commission's (CTC) Active Transportation Program (ATP) and safety-related projects eligible for funding. Among other criteria, the CTC assesses a project's potential to reduce the number, rate, or risk of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and injuries. Pedestrian and bike infrastructure eligible for funding include protected and separated bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, and curb ramps.

An internet search reveals many examples of local jurisdictions removing or considering removing bike lanes in response to community concerns about parking or vehicular congestion impacts (e.g., Culver City, Los Angeles, City of Vista, San Mateo and Berkeley considering removing bike lanes). In these latter two examples the committee examined, both cities previously approved bike lanes in planning documents (2020 San Mateo Bike Master Plan and 2017 Berkeley Bicycle Plan) subject to public input.

In February 2025, the San Mateo City Council voted to replace a recently developed bike lane, included in its 2020 Bike Master Plan (Master Plan), on Humboldt Street with 100 parking spots. As described in the Master Plan (incorporated into the City's circulation element): "This Plan is an update of the City's 2011 Bicycle Master Plan and serves as a blueprint for expanding and improving the San Mateo bicycle and mobility network in the coming years." It is a high-level document detailing the Master Plan's goals and objectives, existing bike conditions, proposed bike network, proposed implementation and funding. Other than listing the Humboldt Street project in a table of 69 other project priorities and graphically depicting its location on a map representing the city's Proposed Bicycle Network, the Master Plan provides no further project details.

This is not unusual for planning level documents. In fact, the Master Plan states: "As a next step, planning level concept designs will be developed for certain high, or medium-high, priority projects in areas where construction of the facility may be complicated due to limited available street right-of-way, complex lane or roadway geometries, the junction of multiple bikeway recommendations, and/or other factors. The community will be invited to provide input on the designs prior to implementation of each project through the standard project outreach effort. The conceptual engineering designs will provide detail for projects that will help the city be more competitive for grant funding and in developing partnerships to implement these projects."

Inviting public input as described above is a routine and integral part of the development of public infrastructure. For conceptual plans like the San Mateo Bike Master Plan, this opportunity likely happens before a planning level body (and not the city council), which is probably the more appropriate body to consider rights-of-way, roadway geometries, and similar issues. But this bill presumes that a legislative body should not be informed of nor provide feedback on complex designs, implementation challenges, partnerships and other issues potentially not considered by a planning body and, more importantly, should not invite public input about them. Moreover, the removal of parking or downsizing of a roadway to accommodate a bike lane could involve difficult tradeoffs that a legislative body, and not just a planning body or a subcommittee of a legislative body, arguably should consider and be held accountable for. In this instance, the committee may wish to consider whether it is the proper role of the Legislature to prohibit a legislative body from considering public input during a "community input meeting".

51% for speedbumps. With respect to traffic calming measures, this bill prevents a legislative body from requiring more than a simple majority of nearby residents to sign a petition in support of such measures. The author cited several press articles or editorials critical of a two-thirds threshold requirement in the Cities of Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Oakland.

In Sacramento, the process of installing a speedbump (or speed lump) is more complicated. First, a resident-petitioner must first convince 10 neighbors to sign an initial petition, after which the city measures vehicle speeds. Assuming at least 15% of drivers exceed the 85th percentile measured speed by more than 5 mph, the street is eligible for a speedbump and assigned a

priority ranking. If sufficiently ranked, the speedbump will be installed but only with two-thirds of residents supporting the speedbump via a mail-in election with at least 25% turnout. The City of Oakland's process is far simpler—nine physical criteria must be met—but two-thirds of residents on a block must sign a petition.

In other parts of the state a two-thirds voting threshold for the installation of traffic calming measures is not uncommon. In addition to the above cities, the City of Oxnard and San Joaquin County also impose this requirement, and Fresno and Bakersfield go even further by requiring 3/4 resident approval. But it is not clear to what extent this requirement is shared more broadly statewide and, more importantly, whether such thresholds are, in fact, frustrating the development of critical traffic calming measures to a degree that requires state intervention. Assuming they are, do the presumed safety benefits of traffic calming measures outweigh any state interest in ensuring broad neighborhood support for such measures? These are some questions the committee may want to consider.

Writing in support, Streets for All, sponsor of the bill states: “California communities are facing a persistent safety crisis on their streets, yet the delivery of proven solutions is often slowed or blocked by outdated statutes, duplicative processes, and unreasonable administrative hurdles. Projects that have already gone through extensive planning and public engagement can be delayed or canceled late in the process. Residents seeking basic traffic calming improvements are sometimes required to gather excessive levels of support, creating inequitable barriers to safer streets. In addition, current law limits the ability of cities to respond quickly to safety needs on slow streets, and the existing Pedestrian Mall Law reflects an outdated framework that does not match today's goals for vibrant, people-first public spaces.”

Writing in opposition, the League of California Cities, California State Association of Counties, and the Urban Counties of California state: “A central concern with AB 1976 is its clear effort to limit public participation in local transportation and street design decisions. The bill would prohibit cities or counties from holding a community input meeting on a proposed pedestrian or bicycle safety project once that project has been included in an approved plan to be implemented through the circulation element of the general plan. That restriction is deeply troubling. Inclusion of a concept in a planning document should not be treated as a substitute for meaningful, project-specific public engagement. Projects often evolve considerably between conceptual planning and actual implementation, and local residents, businesses, property owners, emergency service providers, and other stakeholders deserve the opportunity to comment on how a specific proposal will function on the ground. By cutting off public engagement at a late but still critical stage of decision-making, the bill reduces transparency, weakens public trust, and limits a city's ability to respond to legitimate neighborhood concerns.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Streets For All (sponsor)
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition
San Francisco Bay Area Planning & Urban Research Association
South Pas Active Streets
Sustainable Claremont

Transform
Western Electrical Contractors Association (if amended)

Opposition

California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities
Urban Counties of California
Twenty-One Individuals

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