

Date of Hearing: June 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

SB 1382 (Alvarado-Gil) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: Department of Transportation: mountain passes: openings.

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), on or before April 1 of each year, to notify an affected local official and inform the public about its proposed schedule for closing and opening mountain passes on the state highway system. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines “mountain pass” to mean a state highway that has a physical gate that is used to close the state highway through traffic during winter months or an emergency.
- 2) Requires Caltrans, to the extent feasible, on or before April 1 of each year, to notify an affected local official of its proposed schedule for opening a mountain pass.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to develop a public outreach plan to inform the public about the closing and opening of a mountain pass. Requires the public outreach plan to include, but not be limited to, publishing that information on Caltrans’ internet website.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires Caltrans, on or before July 1, 1992, to adopt and implement a deicing policy for state highways including a plan and method for deicing state highways, using all appropriate deicing technologies, while maintaining highway safety; this plan must be incorporated into Caltrans budget proposals annually (Streets and Highways Code (SHC) §95.6).
- 2) Requires Caltrans to remove snow from a specified portion of Interstate 80 (SHC §95.5).

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, Caltrans estimates annual ongoing costs of approximately \$417,000 in staff time and workload across several Caltrans districts for external engagement with local officials and the public about mountain pass closures and potential opening dates, as well as the development of outreach plans by district staff that must also be reviewed by Caltrans headquarters. Costs to publish outreach plans on the Caltrans website would be absorbable.

COMMENTS: *According to the author,* “SB 1382 addresses ongoing concerns from rural communities regarding the lack of clear and timely communication about the opening of mountain passes under Caltrans’ control. While safety and weather conditions must guide operational decisions, rural residents and local officials have consistently expressed frustration with limited visibility into expected opening timelines, making it difficult to plan for travel, commerce, and seasonal activity. This bill establishes a reasonable and transparent framework by requiring Caltrans to inform local officials, where feasible, of proposed opening schedules by April 1 each year and to develop a public outreach plan to better communicate closures and openings to the public. By improving coordination with local governments and ensuring more

consistent public communication, SB 1382 helps rural residents, businesses, and visitors better plan for seasonal access while maintaining necessary flexibility for safety considerations.”

Mountain passes are part of state highway system. The state’s rural highway system, encompassing over 30,000 lane miles, includes highways that traverse the Sierra Nevada Mountain range. Three of these highways include mountain passes in the Central Sierra managed by Caltrans, including the closing and re-opening of physical gates to restrict traffic. These passes are located in Caltrans District 10: Ebbetts Pass on State Route 4 in Alpine County, Monitor Pass on State Route 89 in Alpine County, and Sonora Pass on State Route 108 in Tuolumne County. Tioga Pass on State Route 120 in Mariposa County, which is the highest mountain pass in the state at 9,943 feet, is also closed during the winter but is located in Yosemite National Park and managed by the National Park Service.

The timing of the closure/opening of the above Caltrans-managed passes is based on considerations such as snow levels, weather conditions, public and worker safety, road damage, and public and economic interests. Caltrans has a goal of opening all three passes prior to Memorial Day, but the exact timeframes can vary greatly. Last year, Caltrans closed all three passes on December 26, 2025, and opened them between April 30 and May 6 this year. This year’s warm, early-spring conditions allowed Caltrans to begin snow removal operations on Sonora and Ebbetts Passes a week earlier than usual. However, in 2023, a record snow year, Caltrans opened Sonora and Ebbetts Passes on June 8.

Can passes be safely opened sooner? According to the author, some local officials are concerned that Caltrans may be considering factors other than those mentioned above when opening passes like the Sonora pass, and that in lighter snow years the pass could be opened by as much as two to four weeks earlier. Perceived delays in opening the passes can cause frustration to tourism-dependent local businesses or residents needing to drive longer distances.

How much public notice is reasonable? Caltrans says that they rely on a number of communication channels to inform the public about road conditions such as the closure and opening of mountain passes in the Sierras. For example, real-time or near real-time information is published on Caltrans’ website and via a web and mobile app called QuickMap, a web and app tool that provides real-time traffic information such as closures, road conditions, and scheduled openings on the State highway system. Additionally, Caltrans District 10 sends notices to local officials and traffic advisories to local news outlets, and posts on social media with estimates of mountain pass openings. However, the author’s office notes that internet reliability may impede effective use of these mediums.

This bill requires Caltrans, on or before April 1st each year, to notify elected officials of their proposed schedule for opening the mountain passes. It does not define “affected local official” nor prescribe the means of notification, but presumably the local official would inform their constituents and the public. Additionally, this bill requires Caltrans to develop a public outreach plan to inform the public about the closing and opening of the mountain passes, including publishing the information on its website. Caltrans currently posts general information on closing/opening of passes on its website.

Writing in support, Tuolumne County Supervisor Daniel Anaiah Kirk states, “For regions like Tuolumne County, predictable access through corridors such as Highway 108 is not just a convenience, it is an economic lifeline. Even small delays in opening can result in significant

financial losses, while timely openings can generate substantial economic activity for local businesses, lodging, restaurants, and recreation providers.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Martin Huberty, Calaveras County District 3 Supervisor
Daniel Anaiah Kirk, County of Tuolumne District 3 Supervisor
Rural County Representatives of California

Opposition

None received

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