

Date of Hearing: March 13, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

AB 364 (Bryan) – As Introduced February 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Street furniture data: statewide integrated data platform

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop guidelines for data sharing, documentation, public access, quality control, and promotion of open-source and accessible platforms and decision support tools related to street furniture data and requires Caltrans, in consultation with the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), to use the California Minimum General Transit feed Specification (GTFS) guidelines to integrate statewide and publicly accessible street furniture data on a statewide integrated data platform. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires Caltrans to develop a report to the Legislature on the guidelines by January 1, 2025 and every three years thereafter.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to develop the report and guidelines on street furniture data in collaboration with the California Transportation Commission (CTC), state-created transportation entities, local agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, OPR and the State Department of Public Health.
- 3) Defines “street furniture” to mean objects and pieces of equipment installed along a street or road to provide amenities for pedestrians. Street furniture includes, but is not limited to, a bus shelter, trash receptacle, bench, or public toilet.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to designate the department’s Interagency Transportation Equity Advisory Committee, or another entity with expertise and experience working on equity, to review the initial report and advise on the development of subsequent guidelines through a public process to ensure subsequent guidelines address accessibility, equity, and sustainability goals aligned with the department.
- 5) Requires Caltrans, in consultation with OPR, to update the California Minimum GTFS guidelines to integrate statewide and publicly accessible street furniture data on a statewide integrated data platform on the following schedule:
 - a) By January 1, 2025, publicize the guidelines to integrate street furniture data into the GTFS system to allow trip planner applications to use the street furniture data, thereby allowing transit customers to plan trips based on the data.
 - b) By September 1, 2025, make available existing data help by state agencies to the platform, and on a quarterly basis, add information that becomes available.
- 6) Requires the statewide integrated data platform to integrate existing data information from multiple autonomous databases managed by metropolitan planning organizations, state-created transportation agencies, municipal bus operators, counties, cities, and academic entities, using consistent, standardized, and accessible formats. The platform is also required to integrate the following datasets, as available:

- a) Any data available to the department or provided to trip planning services, private mapping services, or companies with public contracts to install and maintain street furniture.
- b) Data on accessibility of street furniture that complies with the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.
- c) Data on ridership, where available.
- d) Data on shade and tree cover, where available.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) The Transportation Development Act (TDA) of 1971, provides funding for transit and non-transit related purposes that comply with regional transportation plans. It serves to improve existing public transportation services and encourage regional transportation coordination. (Public Utilities Code (PUC) 99200)
- 2) Authorizes Caltrans to adopt rules and regulations consistent with TDA. (PUC 99421)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: This bill requires Caltrans to develop guidelines standardizing the collection of data from local governments on street furniture and then integrate that information into the California Minimum GTFS guidelines. The stated intent of the bill is to provide transit riders with better data on where they can find bus stops with shaded structures to avoid the heat. According to an analysis conducted by the Los Angeles Times, around 3,900 deaths occurred in California between 2010 and 2019 as a result of extreme heat (This number is far higher than the state's official estimate of 599 deaths due to heat exposure).

Caltrans division of Rail and Mass Transportation in 2020 established the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) to improve the experience and cost-effectiveness of public transit for riders and operators through three actions: (1) installing an open loop contactless payment system that uses tap to pay enabled mobile devices, bank cards, or prepaid cards, to enable seamless travel across transit providers in order to make payment more convenient, (2) automating pricing flexibility, and (3) developing a platform for transit operators to share static and eventually real-time route information by establishing the California Minimum GTFS guidelines.

According to Caltrans, "The purpose of the California Transit Data Guidelines is to communicate the specific criteria by which Caltrans determines whether GTFS schedule and real time data produced by transit providers and vendors meets the qualitative needs of riders (and therefore trip-planning applications that deliver this data to riders), transit providers, and regulators. The guidelines provide producers with a reference document for the characteristics of high-quality GTFS feeds. All transit providers and GTFS-producing vendors within the State of California are expected to work toward meeting the Guidelines in full."

GTFS was first created in 2006 through a public-private partnership between the transit agency in Portland, Oregon and Google and is the global standard for describing transit schedules and operations for use by trip-planning applications. GTFS is used by thousands of agencies worldwide and is the most common data standard produced by U.S. transit agencies.

The most common ways for transit riders to see the data is through a consumer-facing application such as Google or Apple Maps, a transit provider's signage, or through commercial displays. Caltrans provides guidelines to transit agencies in order to best service the public by providing accurate, complete, and up to-date transit information.

According to the author, "California's 2021 heat wave broke records across the state, with some places like Coachella Valley reaching a scorching 123 degrees. Shade structures can lower the temperature of surfaces beneath them by 25 – 40 degrees, but a recent UCLA study revealed that in Los Angeles alone, only 26% of bus stops have shade structures. When surveyed, 72% of participants indicated shade structures as the greatest need for improvement at bus stops.

As our state gets hotter, our transit riders are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and ignoring their health and safety becomes an issue of climate injustice. Most riders are low-income and households making less than \$50,000 a year are four times more likely to rely on transit than higher income households. The state does not track or make available to the public which bus stops provide shade structures among other street furniture, hamstringing our ability to protect vulnerable riders with safety investments."

An article published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* titled *Heat-Moderating Effects of Bus Stop Shelters and Tree Shade on Public Transport Ridership*, explored the effects of heat on transit ridership in Austin, Texas. The research found that "in exploring the temperature-ridership relationship, our finding that warm season temperatures exhibited a significant, yet modest, negative association with bus ridership corroborated results from previous studies. This finding suggests the need to adapt bus transit systems to protect against ridership losses induced by temperature increases during the warm season. Yet, the two climate change adaptation strategies investigated in this study—bus stop shelters and trees—exhibited insignificant or modest associations with ridership on high-temperature days, which may be attributed to the transit dependency of transit users."

According to MoveLA, the sponsors of the bill, "Street furniture is a public asset—similar to libraries and parks—used by seniors as a rest stop, bus riders to protect themselves from the elements while waiting for the bus, and families seeking a cool spot during heat waves. Just like transit routes, this data should be easily accessible to the public via mapping programs and apps. AB 364 would ensure that this data is available to everyone whilst also identifying opportunities, through the Caltrans Interagency Transportation Equity Advisory Committee, to address inequitable access to climate-resilient street furniture."

Committee concerns: The purpose of GTFS is to provide transit riders with real time updates on when transit buses will arrive. The California Minimum GTFS guidelines were created by Caltrans standardize this data to make it useful and easy for the consumer. While having Google maps or other mapping technology provide information on where a bus stop with shelter, a toilet, or trash may be helpful, unlike GTFS, there currently is not a national standard related to data collection of trash cans, toilets, tree shade, or bus shelters.

The Legislature may want to consider if adding street furniture data to the minimum GTFS standards, in addition to real time transit location and arrival updates, may discourage transit agencies from participating in or working with Caltrans on adopting GTFS standards for real time data. More often than not, cities, not transit agencies, are often responsible for building street furniture and transit agencies may not have the necessary information to meet the new GTFS minimum guidelines as required by the bill. This may have negative consequences for the

population this bill is attempting to help. In contrast, having the real time transit update could help riders mitigate the impact of extreme heat by permitting them to more accurately arrive at the bus stop when the bus is going to arrive, decreasing the amount of time they must wait in the heat.

This bill also requires the input of numerous government agencies and committees that are currently not involved in creating the GTFS guidelines. Many of the divisions Caltrans that this bill seeks to codify have generally been created through the regulatory process and have never been codified and have a different purpose than the one outlined in this bill. For example, this bill codifies the Interagency Equity Advisory Committee as a division of Caltrans and asks them to review Caltrans guidelines on street furniture. The Interagency Equity Advisory Committee is not housed under Caltrans and was created by CTC as a partnership between CTC, Caltrans and the California Transportation Agency. The purpose of the committee is to assist in state transportation planning guidelines, funding programs, and transportation programs for the purposes of providing quantitative and qualitative metrics for evaluating equity benefits and outcomes on transportation projects. The committee membership was approved in October of 2022 and has yet to take any action as of the writing of this analysis. This bill would instead redirect the committee to help Caltrans develop computer data standards for trash cans and bus shelters every three years.

Should this bill continue through the process, the author may wish to consider limiting the number of agencies involved in the guidelines process and if the Interagency Equity Advisory Committee is an appropriate body to review data guidelines.

Double Referral: Should this bill pass this committee it will be referred to the Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee.

Previous Legislation:

AB 1975 (Nazarian of 2022) would have required cities and counties to submit a report that identifies the number of bus shelters within the city or county. That bill was held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Move LA (sponsor)
AARP California
Aging and Disability Transportation Network
ClimatePlan
Climate Resolve
Coalition for Clean Air
Pacoima Beautiful
PolicyLink
Streets for All
Transform
Youth vs. Apocalypse
40 Acre Conservation League

Opposition

None on file

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