

Date of Hearing: March 19, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 2062 (Maienschein) – As Amended March 12, 2018

SUBJECT: State highways: landscaping

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), when appropriate, to include California native wildflowers and climate-appropriate vegetation in planting projects, with priority given to those species of wildflowers that will help rebuild pollinator populations.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that Caltrans has full possession and control of all state highways and associated property.
- 2) Authorizes Caltrans to take any act necessary, convenient or proper for the construction, improvement, maintenance or use of all highways within its jurisdiction.
- 3) Requires Caltrans, where practical or desirable, to replace trees that have been destroyed or removed because of projects undertaken to widen the highway.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to use drought resistant landscaping along freeways whenever feasible, taking into consideration such factors as erosion control and fire retardant needs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Pollinators, specifically the honey bee, are essential to the agricultural industry of our state and nation. In the United States, bees pollinate crops valued at more than \$15 billion per year including many varieties of fruits, vegetables, and plants such as alfalfa and clover to feed cattle and other grazing animals. For example, the California almond industry, which is responsible for producing over 80 percent of global almond production amounting to a total value in excess of \$4.8 billion, requires the pollinating services of roughly 1.4 million beehives annually.

According to the author, California's bee population has declined in recent years due to multiple factors including lack of foraging opportunity, parasitic infestation, and pesticide use. California must secure its bee population to ensure the future success and well-being of the state.

Acknowledging that there is no single cause for the decline of the state's bee population, the author believes one solution to promote pollinator health year-round is to increase opportunities for foraging. This bill seeks to highlight the vital role pollinators hold in California's agricultural industry by codifying language that is already present in the state's Highway Design Manual.

Committee comments: It is unclear why this bill is necessary, as Caltrans' manuals already require the use of native wildflowers in order to encourage and nurture pollinator populations. Specifically, Caltrans Highway Design Manual states "when appropriate, planting projects must include California native wildflowers as an integral and permanent part of the planting design." It seems this bill, if enacted, would not accomplish anything more than what Caltrans is currently undertaking related to highway roadside landscaping.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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