

Date of Hearing:

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Jim Frazier, Chair
AB 29 (Holden) – As Introduced December 3, 2018

SUBJECT: State Highway Route 710

SUMMARY: Defines the section of State Route (SR) 710 between SR 1 and Interstate (I) -10 as part of the state freeway and expressway system, removing from this system the section of SR 710 between I-10 and I-210.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Grants the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) broad authority to have full possession and control of all state highways and all property and rights in property acquired for state highway purposes. The department is authorized and directed to lay out and construct all state highways between termini designated by law.
- 2) Declares that it is essential to the future development of the State to construct a statewide system of controlled-access freeways and expressways.
- 3) Identifies the state highways to be included in the Freeway and Expressway System.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: SR 710 is a major north-south interstate running 23 miles through Los Angeles County, from Long Beach in the south to Alhambra in the north, stopping approximately 6 miles short of the originally planned northerly terminus in Pasadena. Efforts to complete the segment between I-10 in Alhambra and I-210 in Pasadena, sometimes dubbed the "freeway gap closure," have started and stalled several times over the past 60 years. In fact, Caltrans owns and still maintains hundreds of homes in the corridor that were bought as far back as the 1960s to preserve the corridor for the freeway long ago proposed but as of yet not delivered.

Many believe that failure to complete the SR 710 North improvement project contributes to traffic congestion in northeastern Los Angeles and the northwestern San Gabriel Valley, as there are no north-south freeways in the heavily populated area between I-5 and I-605. Over the past fifty years, alternative concepts have been proposed and evaluated to build the SR 710 freeway between I-10 and I-210. Community members, particularly residents of Pasadena, have opposed the freeway project because of concerns about the impact of the freeway on their community.

Most recently, the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) identified five alternatives to improve transportation in the area. The alternatives include: a transportation system management/ transportation demand management (TSM/TDM) approach, light-rail transit and/or bus rapid transit, a tunnel under Pasadena, and a no build option. Of these options, constructing the tunnel is the most costly option at an estimated \$3 to \$5.6 billion. The TSM/TDM alternative is designed to maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation system by improving capacity on the local street system and reducing the effects of bottlenecks and chokepoints. These relatively low-cost, low-impact strategies include coordinated traffic signal timing to help

relieve congestion, ramp metering to control the entry of vehicles onto a freeway, and minor street widening and intersection improvements to improve traffic circulation.

In May of 2018, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) Board of Directors voted to no longer consider project alternatives that are deemed “unfundable,” specifically referring to the tunnel, and began developing details for funding the TSM/TDM alternative. In November of 2018, as the implementing agency, Caltrans finalized the EIR and recommended the TSM/ TDM option as the preferred alternative. This officially enables LA Metro to begin spending regional funds to implement the TSM/TDM program.

According to the author, “The 710 has divided communities in the San Gabriel Valley for too long. The well-intentioned proposal to build a freeway 50 years ago has led to a neighborhood deteriorating physically and an ongoing feud that has left both sides with the consequences of inaction. AB 29 will remove the most disputed section of the SR 710 from the state’s Freeway and Expressway system. This is in line with the stated intentions of Caltrans and the local transportation authority, LA Metro, to stop pursuing the construction of a freeway tunnel and begin pursuing a collaborative, community supported alternative. It removes the possibility of a freeway being built in the future, in order to allow the community to move on.”

Committee comment: There have been a number of legislative efforts to limit or predetermine the outcome of the SR 710 North project. To date, none of these measures have been signed into law. This bill is different, because both the state and the region have concluded their studies of the alternatives and made a determination for the project going forward. This bill simply amends existing law to conform with the determined outcome.

Related legislation: SB 7 (Portantino) restricts Caltrans from implementing a freeway tunnel or surface freeway or expressway for Route 710 between Route 10 and Route 210. This bill is awaiting hearing from Senate Transportation Committee.

Previous legislation: AB 553 (Holden) of 2017, similar to this bill, would have removed a specific portion of SR 710 from the freeway and expressway system. AB 533 was held in the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee.

AB 287 (Holden) of 2017 would have required Caltrans, along with LA Metro, to create an SR 710 North Advisory Committee, prohibited the advisory committee from considering a tunnel or freeway extension, and explicitly prohibited Caltrans from building a freeway tunnel or surface freeway to fill the SR 710 gap. AB 287 was held in the Assembly Transportation Committee.

SB 204 (Liu) of 2012 would have, among other things, authorized LA Metro, in consultation with Caltrans and acting jointly with affected cities, to develop and file with the California Transportation Commission a local alternative transportation improvement program to address transportation problems and opportunities in the SR 710 study area. Governor Brown vetoed SB 204.

SB 545 (Cedillo) of 2009 would have required that any solution for SR 710 between Valley Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles and Del Mar Boulevard in the City of Pasadena not be a surface or above-grade highway. SB 545 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger, calling it unnecessary as Caltrans and LA Metro worked toward a solution.

SB 545 (Cedillo) of 2002 would have prohibited the SR 710 freeway gap closure project from being constructed as a surface or above-grade highway. SB 545 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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