

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 726 (Nazarian) – As Amended March 26, 2015

SUBJECT: Vehicles: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to operate articulated buses of up to 82 feet in length on the route designated as the Orange Line in Los Angeles County.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Generally limits the length of a vehicle to 40 feet, but creates numerous exceptions to the limit.
- 2) Limits the length of a bus to 45 feet.
- 3) Limits the length of an articulated bus to 60 feet.

FISCAL EFFECT: None

COMMENTS: MTA purchased the abandoned Southern Pacific Burbank Branch railroad line in 1991 and eventually constructed a bus rapid transit (BRT) line, known as the Orange Line, along the route. The Orange Line opened in 2005 as a 14-mile route consisting of two-lane dedicated busways for 60-foot articulated buses. The line crosses 34 streets and five mid-block pedestrian crosswalks. At signalized intersections, loop detectors give Orange Line buses traffic signal priority. Adjacent to the dedicated busways there are eight miles of bicycle and pedestrian paths, with designated on-street bike lanes for the remaining six miles. In 2012 MTA completed a four-mile northern extension of the Orange Line, connecting four new stations.

When the Orange Line opened, MTA estimated that ridership would average 16,000 riders on weekdays. By 2012, daily ridership had grown to 31,787 and continues to grow. The line operates near capacity, especially during peak periods. In 2011, MTA, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, developed the Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit Sustainable Corridor Implementation Plan (Orange Line CRT Sustainable CIP). The plan identified the use of longer articulated buses on the Orange Line as one way to expand capacity on the line and improve travel times. In addition to examining improvements to the existing BRT system, MTA also analyzed the possible conversion of the Orange Line to a light-rail line.

AB 726 authorizes the MTA to run articulated buses of up to 82 feet in length on the Orange Line. According to the author, AB 726 is needed to "effectively address the growing public transportation needs of the San Fernando Valley, alleviate congestion, and take advantage of available transportation resources." The author notes that AB 726 does not mandate the use of longer articulated buses, but rather gives MTA the option as one way to address overcrowding issues on the Orange Line. Given that the Orange Line is a dedicated busway and the longer buses would not be interacting with other vehicles, this authorization is a reasonable tool to give MTA as it tries to address Orange Line capacity issues.

Arguments in support: Writing in support, MTA, the sponsor of this bill, argues that "bi-articulated buses could allow for expansion on this important line. Bi-articulated buses would be restricted to running exclusively in the [Orange Line] right-of-way and would be segregated from other vehicles. On the [Orange Line] right-of-way, the extended length of these vehicles is not expected to have any impact on safety."

Arguments in opposition: Writing in opposition, the United Transportation Union argues that "unsafe conditions created by this size of a bus being allowed to operated, especially in the greater Los Angeles area, far outweighs any benefit for using busses of this size and length."

Proposed amendment: The author committed to adding the following language to AB 726 when it was heard in Local Government Committee: "Implementation of this provision is subject to the agency's meet and confer requirements with the bargaining representatives of its employees, pursuant to the Meyers-Miliias-Brown Act." Due to timing issues, the bill could not be amended in Local Government Committee so the author would like to amend the bill in this committee.

Double referral: This bill passed out of the Assembly Local Government Committee on April 22, 2015, with a 9-0 vote.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Sponsor)
Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles

Opposition

United Transportation Union

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