

Date of Hearing: July 5, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Laura Friedman, Chair
SB 710 (Durazo) – As Amended June 26, 2023

SENATE VOTE: 32-3

SUBJECT: Sale of excess state highway property: State Highway Route 710 Terminus

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to establish a Terminus Regional Planning Task Force (Task Force), and requires the Task Force to submit a report to the Legislature on traffic issues and potential land uses related to State Route 710, including the Alhambra 710 Arterial Project. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines “State Route 710 Terminus” as the Route 710 Terminus in the City of Alhambra, north of Route 10, built and currently operating as State Route 710.
- 2) Defines “State Route 710 Terminus adjacent areas” as any department-owned areas or any areas impacted by past department planning for State Route 710, within the geographic area in any jurisdiction of the County of Los Angeles bounded by North Eastern Street to the west; Huntington Drive, west of the intersection of Huntington Drive and West Main Street, and West Main Street, east of that intersection, on the north; South Fremont Avenue on the east; and Route 10 on the south, excluding the State Route 710 Terminus.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to establish and administer a Terminus Regional Planning Task Force to discuss traffic issues and potential land uses related to the State Route 710 Terminus in the City of Alhambra and requires the Task Force be composed of the following representatives:
 - a) Two representatives from the City of Alhambra;
 - b) Two representatives from the City of Los Angeles, one of whom resides in the 90032 Zip Code;
 - c) One representative from the County of Los Angeles;
 - d) One representative from the California State University Los Angeles;
 - e) One representative from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority;
 - f) One representative from a business or workforce entity;
 - g) One representative from a community-based organization; and,
 - h) No more than two additional members to be appointed by the department.
- 4) Requires Caltrans to ensure jurisdictional balance when selecting the Task Force.
- 5) Requires the Task Force to meet quarterly and submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, which includes a summary and status of the Alhambra 710 Arterial Project.
- 6) Provides that nothing can be construed to authorize the committee to impede a local jurisdiction from implementing additional projects at the State Route 710 or its adjacent areas
- 7) Repeals these provisions on January 1, 2027.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires Caltrans to offer to sell unimproved property within State Route 710 at the price paid by Caltrans for original acquisition to a housing-related entity for affordable housing purposes. (Street and Highways Code (SHC) Section 54235.1)
- 2) Restricts Caltrans from increasing the rent of a tenant who resides in a surplus residential property, located within the State Route 710. (SHC Section 54238.9)
- 3) Restricts Caltrans from considering a freeway or tunnel alternatives to close the Interstate 710 North Gap. (SHC Section 54237.8)
- 4) Grants 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. (SHC Section 90)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) Caltrans costs, likely in the low to mid hundreds of thousands of dollars annually until the 2024-25 fiscal year (State Highway Account), to convene the Task Force and develop the specified report.
- 2) Caltrans estimates additional unknown costs to conduct transportation and land use planning workload. The planning costs related to this bill could similarly be funded by other local, regional, state, and federal funds available for this purpose through the potential award of funds under the competitive state and federal reconnecting communities funding programs. (state/local/regional/federal funds)

COMMENTS: Caltrans planned to build a freeway in the 1950s to connect the Port of Long Beach north to Interstate 5, Interstate 10, and the Interstate 210 freeway in Pasadena. However, only 23 miles of the southern part of the SR 710 freeway was built in 1964. The project ended five miles short of its intended connection to Interstate 210, causing cut-through traffic on Valley Boulevard in Alhambra, as well as in neighboring streets and freeways. Of the 58,300 vehicles commuting through State Route 710 terminus, 78% percent are commuters on cut-through trips, who do not stop in Alhambra. As a result, streets in Alhambra are congested by drivers looking to avoid freeway traffic. The significant growth of cargo volumes handled at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have also added a large amount of traffic, pollution, and damaged pavements.

Local issue. The gap in the freeway not only affects the city of Alhambra, but also its surrounding cities of El Sereno, South Pasadena, Pasadena, and a portion of Los Angeles. While the northern terminus in the City of Pasadena is under one city's jurisdiction, many different entities need to cooperate if the southern terminus is to be improved. The terminus is at the nexus of the cities of Alhambra and Los Angeles (specifically the El Sereno neighborhood) and also bordered by California State University, Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and Caltrans identified alternatives to the freeway gap closure, which did not require the demolition of any homes, in 2018. Subsequent legislation prevented Caltrans from pursuing the freeway gap closure and as a result, many properties that were acquired for the transportation project are now surplus, and no longer needed. Caltrans began disposing of these properties, in accordance with several laws that were enacted over the past few years.

Metro recently allocated more than \$1 billion in local, state, and federal funds to Alhambra, Monterey Park, Pasadena, Rosemead, San Gabriel, San Marino, South Pasadena, and the City and County of Los Angeles for alternative projects. The Metro board directed the funding to go toward multi-modal facilities, not just car-centric projects, intended to alleviate traffic problems caused by the gap.

Recently, multi-modal projects have been introduced around the State Route 710 to address traffic issues and safety concerns such as “mobility hubs” in the northern part of the State Route 710 Terminus, intended to provide commuters and residents with diverse travel options including: walking, biking, transit, and shared mobility like rideshare and scooter share. The Valley Boulevard Multi-Modal Transportation Improvement Project also envisioned transformative corridor improvements for all modes of transportation including car, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian activities along a four mile corridor connecting the northern end of the State Route 710 freeway to Union Station, Hospitals, and the California State University, Los Angeles.

The City of Alhambra proposed a concept that would improve nearby Interstate 10 off-ramps and connect the six lane freeway into a four lane divided arterial with a pedestrian pathway, bicycle path, landscaping, and street improvements. The arterial would reduce traffic, and divert traffic onto Interstate 5 and 605. However, the proposal to expand the westbound ramps to the Fremont and Hellman Intersection, and eastbound ramps to the intersection of Montezuma Avenue and Fremont, could lead to property impacts and access impacts, causing schools, churches, and local businesses near Fremont Avenue to be demolished or trimmed.

Recommendations from the Task Force could lead to proposals for different projects than those for which the City of Alhambra already has provided funding. However, the local jurisdictions are not required to implement recommendations from the Task Force, and the Task Force may not impeded a local jurisdiction from implementing alternate projects not enumerated in the recommendations.

Analyzing all options. This bill requires Caltrans to establish a Task Force to make recommendations about the best use of surplus property and how to best address the traffic issues around the southern stub of State Route 710.

The availability of property in an otherwise congested area, provides a unique opportunity to benefit the public. The Task can offer perspectives that would allow for alternative projects to be recommended, after years of inaction. These alternatives could move away from car-centric projects toward pedestrian-centric ones. However, the question arises if alternative projects such as parks and affordable housing would reduce traffic in an already congested area. Fiscal committees could address if this is an appropriate use of state funding, given that the region is already shifting towards multi-modal projects and local jurisdictions could implement their own projects, regardless of the Task Force’s recommendations.

According to the author, “SB 710 will establish a Terminus Regional Planning Task Force, bringing together a diverse set of stakeholders to study potential uses for the State Route 710 terminus adjacent areas. Seventy years ago, under the threat of eminent domain, the State of California displaced families and altered our communities for a freeway expansion in Los Angeles County. In January 2020, the Legislature declared there would be no extension for the 710, and therefore much of this land is no longer needed by the department, creating a unique opportunity to repair the scars left by this abandoned project and work to make this area more complete. Many of the affected communities have invested time and effort working to propose how to best modernize and revitalize this area. SB 710 will provide the support structure needed to bring these groups together to discuss a way forward.”

In support, Concerned Neighbors of El Sereno writes, “The opening up of this land provides a unique opportunity to come together and work to make this area more complete and more connected...our community will greatly benefit from a united effort to revitalize this region. For these reasons, Concerned Neighbors of El Sereno support SB 710.”

In opposition, Rosemead Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Information Center, writes, “Alhambra’s 710 Arterial Project creates better mobility, less congestion, and improved air quality for the area...we stand in solidarity with the City of Alhambra in the pursuit and completion of the 710 Arterial Project.”

Previous legislation. SB 381 (Portantino) Chapter 362, Statutes of 2021 makes changes to the Roberti Act to encourage the sale of homes owned by Caltrans for low- and moderate-income rental housing in the State Route 710 corridor in South Pasadena.

SB 51 (Durazo) Chapter 130, Statutes of 2021 makes changes to the Roberti Act to encourage the sale of homes owned by Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for low- and moderate-income housing in the City of Los Angeles and makes changes to the Surplus Land Act.

SB 7 (Portantino) Chapter 835, Statutes of 2019 restricts Caltrans from considering a freeway or tunnel as a feasible alternative for State Route (SR) 710 between Interstate (I-) 10 and I-210, and makes other changes related to the SR 710 corridor.

AB 29 (Holden) Chapter 791, Statutes of 2019 restricts Caltrans from considering a freeway or tunnel as a feasible alternative for State Route (SR) 710 between Interstate (I-) 10 and I-210, and redefines, as of January 1, 2024, which portions of SR 710 are included in the state freeway and expressway system to exclude the section of SR 710 generally between I-10 and I-210.

AB 287 (Holden of 2018) 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.

SB 416 (Liu) Chapter 468, Statutes of 2013 makes a number of changes to the Roberti Act, which governs the sale of surplus property in the SR 710 corridor, including authorization for the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to sell properties in an “as-is” condition to specified income-qualified persons. The bill also required the proceeds from the sale of those properties to be deposited into a newly created continuously appropriated fund, rather than the State Highway Account, for purposes of providing repairs to remaining properties until the last property is sold.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Alhambra
City of Los Angeles
Concerned Neighbors of El Sereno
El Sereno Arroyo Playground Vecinos
Grifols
Immersion Workforce Los Angeles
LA Hillside Village Property Owner's Association

Opposition (based on bill version prior to June 26, 2023 amendments)

Alhambra Chamber of Commerce
Alhambra Unified School District
City of Monterey Park
City of Pasadena
City of Rosemead
City of San Gabriel
City of South Pasadena
Rosemead Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Information Center
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments

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