

Date of Hearing: June 27, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

SB 998 (Wieckowski) – As Amended May 3, 2016

SENATE VOTE: 35-0

SUBJECT: Vehicles: mass transit guideways

SUMMARY: Prohibits an individual from operating, stopping, parking or leaving a motor vehicle in a portion of the highway designated exclusively for public transit buses. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits a person from operating a motor vehicle on a portion of the highway designated for the exclusive use of public transit buses, except in compliance with the directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device.
- 2) Prohibits a person from stopping, parking, or leaving a vehicle standing in a portion of the highway designated for the exclusive use of public transit buses, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device.

EXISTING LAW: Prohibits a person from stopping, parking, or leaving a vehicle, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with directions of a peace officer or official traffic control device, in any of the following places: an intersection, on a crosswalk, between a safety zone and the adjacent right-hand curb, within 15 feet of the driveway entrance to a fire station, in front of a driveway, a portion of a sidewalk, on the roadway side of a parked vehicle, in a tunnel, on a bridge, and in passenger loading zones, including bus stops.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high-capacity, lower-cost public transit service intended to effectively accommodate longer-distance passenger trips in transit-intensive corridors in urbanized areas. By operating in bus-only lanes in these corridors, public transit agencies are able to decrease travel times, increase reliability, and make their bus service a more attractive transportation alternative to driving. BRT is gaining popularity as a solution to buses stuck in regular traffic congestion. Additionally, BRT is less expensive than constructing a fixed guideway rail line and is flexible to meet community needs.

Several public transit agencies in California are currently operating or constructing BRT projects utilizing exclusive bus-only lanes, including the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Omnitrans in San Bernardino County, the Sacramento Regional Transit District, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA).

For example, in 2014 the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) opened the sbX Green line, the county's first-ever express passenger service, offering alternative transportation to major destinations in the cities of San Bernardino and Loma Linda. The 16-mile corridor

provides service every 10 minutes during peak hours. In writing in support of SB 998, SANBAG noted that they have included more express bus routes in their 2016 regional transportation plan and that in addition to providing new transit options, the future corridors will reduce congestion and improve air quality in the valley. SANBAG goes on to state that enforcement of current and future dedicated transit lanes is critical to the safety and efficiency of BRT operations in San Bernardino County. As to new systems, the co-sponsors of the bill, AC Transit, will launch service on a BRT corridor from downtown Oakland to the San Leandro BART station in late 2017.

Current law prohibits motorists from stopping, parking or leaving a vehicle in a bus stop area; however there is no comparable state law relating to bus-only lanes. As noted by VTA, the co-sponsor of this bill, because there is no state prohibition of this activity, public transit agencies cannot ticket motorists who are inappropriately using bus-only lanes and obstructing the operation of BRT service.

California continues to encourage and support the expansion of public transportation options and operations to meet the needs of the traveling public and the state's air quality goals. Updating the state's traffic laws to match these innovations is important for their success.

Related legislation: SB 1051 (Hancock) authorizes AC Transit, until January 1, 2022, to enforce parking violations in transit-only traffic lanes. SB 1051 passed out of committee on June 20, 2016, and is scheduled to be heard by the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee on June 28, 2016.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (Sponsor)
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (Sponsor)
California Transit Association
San Bernardino Associated Governments

Opposition

None on file

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