

Press Release

Governor Newsom Signs Senator Wiener's Safe Streets Bill Into Law

September 27, 2024

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senator Scott Wiener's (D-San Francisco) Senate Bill 960 into law. SB 960 will make California state-owned roads safer for all users by requiring Caltrans to prioritize road improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders. The bill will also improve the speed and safety of public transportation across the state by facilitating the implementation of more public transportation infrastructure like rapid bus lanes and protected bus stops.

"Everyone should feel safe using California's streets, and that includes pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders," said Senator Wiener. "This new law is a powerful step toward transforming our state roads to be safe for all users, in addition to helping cut our climate emissions by making it easier to walk, bike, and take the bus. I'm grateful to the Governor for acting to build safer streets and to our entire coalition for its amazing work."

In transportation planning, "Complete Streets" is an approach to designing and operating roads and the surrounding infrastructure that accounts for all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. It also accounts for the needs of communities that have been systematically ignored in the design of the built environment, including the disability community, the aging community, those without access to vehicles, and communities of color.

Complete Streets elements can include sidewalks, bike lanes, bus-only lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, and more.

In California, most surface roads maintained by the state do not have infrastructure to protect the full range of road users. Most (55%) projects in Caltrans's biggest road maintenance program, the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) have no complete streets elements. Many state-owned roads currently have no or deficient sidewalks, minimal crosswalks, no bike lanes, or any safe facilities for vulnerable road users. The result is that state roads are inaccessible or dangerous to many potential users.

In 2019, the Legislature passed SB 127 (Wiener), which required Caltrans to prioritize safe and connected facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders on all SHOPP projects and in the asset management plan. Such improvements are consistent with recommendations outlined in the State's Climate Action Plan for Transportation

Infrastructure (CAPTI). Governor Newsom vetoed the bill but implemented many of its provisions in watered-down form through executive order.

SB 960 codifies the Department's commitment to implement complete streets by requiring Caltrans to improve oversight and investment practices for the implementation of safe, convenient, and connected facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users on all SHOPP projects.

SB 960 requires Caltrans to include complete streets facilities - including transit priority facilities - in the asset management plan and set targets and performance measures for complete streets facilities in the state highway system management plan. The bill requires Caltrans to increase its oversight of the implementation of complete streets facilities and also requires the department to set 4-year targets for the implementation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that make consistent, proportional progress towards the 10-year targets that Caltrans already sets. SB 960 further requires the Department to establish a streamlined process for the approval of pedestrian facilities, traffic calming improvements, bicycle facilities, and transit priority treatments at locations where state-owned facilities intersect with local facilities.

Prioritizing Transit

Buses and some other modes of public transportation are often stuck in traffic, creating a slow, frustrating, and stressful experience for riders and making transit less attractive. Planners can improve this experience by designating certain roads to be transit priority roads, which could include adding features like a rapid bus lane.

Caltrans has engaged in preliminary stakeholder engagement to develop a transit priority policy. The timeline for development of this policy – or its specific objectives – is currently unclear. Amidst a backdrop of transit ridership struggling to rebound and car ownership costing more than it ever has, it is imperative that this process proceed swiftly.

SB 960 directs Caltrans to develop – by January 1, 2026 – a transit priority policy as well as transit priority facility design guidance by July 1, 2028, to help improve transit travel time reliability, speeds, reduced transit and rider delay, and improved accessibility at stops, stations, and boarding facilities. Further, SB 960 requires Caltrans to implement transit priority facilities in all SHOPP projects as appropriate and feasible, in collaboration with local transit agencies.

Senate Bill 960 is sponsored by Calbike, SPUR, Streets For All, AARP California, KidSafe SF, and Walk SF. ###

WHAT ARE COMPLETE STREETS?



Space for
PEOPLE

Curb ramps, crosswalks, and curb extensions to make it easy for pedestrians to cross streets and access destinations

Space for
BIKES

Designated connected routes and low-stress facilities that support people riding bikes, e-bikes and scooters

Space for
CARS

Traffic calming measures and design cues to encourage slower speeds and driver awareness of vulnerable road users

Space for
MASS TRANSIT

Bus pullouts, shelters, transit-only lanes, and signal priority to create transit-friendly roadways

Space for
SHARED MOBILITY

Designated curb-side space for shared bike and scooter parking that separates users from traffic, and keeps sidewalks clear and safe

Space for
REFUGE

Street furniture, parks, lighting, and public green spaces that promote gathering and social interaction

