

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	April 30, 2025
SUBJECT:	Receive a Legislative Update and Consider Taking Positions or Taking Action on Specific Legislation
AGENDA ITEM:	12
STAFF CONTACT:	Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

SUMMARY:

Staff monitors proposed state legislation each year to determine if proposed bills will help or hinder advancing the transportation goals of the region. Staff identified proposed bills of interest and recommends that the board of directors' take specific positions or actions on them. Staff is also tracking bills related to the next federal surface transportation reauthorization, which typically sets a multi-year framework and funding for federal transportation programs. The existing federal transportation bill, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), ends September 30, 2026.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Receive a legislative update and consider taking positions on specific legislation;
2. Authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for House of Representatives Bill 1383 (LaMalfa); a letter of support for Assembly Bill 239 (Arreguin); and a letter of support for Senate Bill 71 (Wiener);
3. Direct staff to watch progress on Assembly Bill 902 (Schultz) and submit an "oppose unless amended" position if bill moves on to hearings; and
4. Take an "oppose" position on AB 1244 (Wicks) and direct staff to submit a letter if bill moves on to hearings.

BACKGROUND:

California has started a new two-year (2025-2026) legislative cycle with various bills being introduced over the period annually. The Executive Director has been tracking proposed bills introduced in 2025 that could impact advancing the transportation goals of the region or impact the agency in general. Staff identified the following proposed bills of interest with a brief summary recommended agency actions or positions to take.

1. **House of Representatives Bill 1383 (HR 1383) (LaMalfa) – Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2025.** This bill would extend funding to rural counties for education, roads, and wildfire mitigation under the Secure Rural Schools Act. Rural counties have a higher proportion of national forest lands on average, with 31% of total acres in Shasta County made up of national forests. If renewed, this bill would continue to provide approximately \$800,000 annually in funding for rural roads. **Recommended action: Support and submit letter.**
2. **Senate Bill (SB) 239 (Arreguin) – Open meetings: teleconferencing: subsidiary body.** This bill proposes changes to the Ralph M. Brown Act to allow advisory groups of government agencies to hold virtual meetings without stating the member's location to the public as long as the

meeting agenda is posted at the main physical location and all members attending remotely have their camera on at all times during the public portion of the meeting.

This bill only applies to advisory committees that do not make final decisions. For example, SRTA's Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) members could participate remotely as long as there is a primary meeting physical location (i.e., SRTA's office). This provides greater flexibility for membership attendance but does require committee member remote cameras are always on in order for the advisory body to vote on any agenda items that would present recommendations to the SRTA Board of Directors. This bill is similar to AB817 proposed last year, which SRTA supported, but did not pass. **Recommended action: Support and submit letter.**

3. **SB 71 (Wiener) – California Environmental Quality Act: exemptions: transit projects.** This bill would indefinitely extend exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEA) for various roadway, transit, and active transportation projects, including: active transportation plans, pedestrian plans, or bicycle transportation plans for the restriping of streets and highways; bicycle parking and storage; signal timing projects to improve street and highway operations; and related signage for bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Additionally, it would exempt transit comprehensive operational studies and actions including transit route readjustments, or other transit agency route additions, eliminations, or modifications, along with other various transit projects.

The bill permanently extends existing CEQA exemptions for a variety of approved transportation projects. It would reduce city, county, regional agency, and transit agency costs. **Recommended action: Support and submit letter.**

4. **Assembly Bill (AB) 902 (Schultz) – Transportation planning and programming: barriers to wildlife movement.** This bill would require a regional transportation agency to identify and analyze connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within its jurisdiction and consider the impact transportation infrastructure may have on wildlife and habitat connectivity within their next adoption or amendment to a regional transportation plan (RTP) after January 1, 2028. It would require the regional agency to include standards, policies, and feasible implementation programs as part of the regional plan. This bill would require various coordinating and consultation activities between regional transportation agencies and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. This bill may create an unfunded mandate on metropolitan planning organizations and regional transportation planning agencies (MPO/RTPA).

The RTP is a regional planning-level document. Regional transportation agencies already consider the general impacts transportation projects may have on the environment over a 20+ year period when preparing the environmental study for the RTP and consult with various federal and state agencies on potential impacts. As the MPO for the Shasta Region, SRTA must also consider the impact projects in the RTP may have on preserving or reducing the amount of agricultural land in Shasta County. The bill language suggests MPO/RTPAs have a greater involvement in the development and implementation of transportation projects than actually exists. The actions described are more suited for lead agencies such as cities, counties, and Caltrans, who design and build transportation infrastructure. However, the bill has only been

introduced, and no hearings have been scheduled. Additionally, CalCOG is in talks with the bill author and staff to advise on the actual role MPO/RTPAs play in the development of transportation projects. ***Recommended action: Watch and direct staff to submit an “oppose unless amended” position if bill moves to hearings with MPO/RTPA language included.***

- 5. AB 1244 (Wicks) – California Environmental Quality Act: transportation impact mitigation: Transit Oriented Development Implementation Program.** This bill would allow developers under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to meet vehicle miles traveled (VMT) mitigation requirements, per SB 743, for land use developments by contributing fees to a statewide Transit Oriented Development Implementation Program. The bill would require the department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to oversee the program. Fees collected would be used to support transit-friendly housing projects in the same region, first to the same city, and then county. The current version of the bill suggests using a statewide flat fee for VMT.

While the bill may provide funding to support affordable housing, this bill is problematic in several ways. It ignores current challenges in rural regions in the inefficient application of SB743 under CEQA in rural areas. It uses definitions that primarily apply to large urban areas and not to rural or small-urban cities or regions. It currently proposes an unspecified flat fee statewide for VMT mitigation. The bill provides no guidance on what types of projects HCD would choose nor does it guarantee HCD will invest in projects that meet regional or local housing or other related goals. Staff would like more time to review the bill and discuss issues with other regional agencies before responding. ***Recommended action: Take an “Oppose” position and direct staff to submit a letter if bill moves to hearings.***

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may take different stances on the items presented today. The board of directors may direct the executive director to submit letters on bills based on the board’s position without waiting until the June meeting or could direct the executive director to work with the Chair or Fiscal & Policy Committee on submitting letters, if needed, and report back to the board in June.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Staff participated in discussions with CalCOG member agency staff and local and regional partners to understand potential impacts of proposed bills.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact related to this item.

Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

- A.** Letter of Support – HR 1383
- B.** Letter of Support – SB 239
- C.** Letter of Support – SB 71



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Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
District 1 Representative
2885 Churn Creek Road, Suite C
Redding, CA 96002

Subject: Support for Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act – H.R. 1383

Dear Congressman LaMalfa:

The Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) appreciates your continued support of rural counties and regions including your sponsorship of H.R. 1383, the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Reauthorization Act of 2025. SRTA is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for the Shasta County region, a mostly rural area of 3,847 square miles, averaging 47 person per square mile in Northern California. SRTA conducts regional transportation planning activities focused on maintaining and improving the region's transportation systems for all users, of all abilities, and all modes of transportation in coordination with our city, county, and regional partners.

Rural counties, like Shasta County, have significant portions of their land consisting of federal lands, which are exempt from local taxes, but must maintain extensive networks of rural roads used by residents and visitors alike, with much less resources than urban counties. Since 2000, the Secure Rural Schools Act has been a lifeline in providing funding to rural counties that have been impacted from losses of timber revenue that helped maintain critical infrastructure. The SRS has been key in providing funding to support maintaining rural roads, schools, and wildfire prevention. In Shasta County, the SRS has provided, on average, annual funding of \$800,000 each for roads and schools and \$150,000 for wildfire prevention. Without SRS reauthorization, funding for these critical needs will hinder maintaining our rural transportation systems, result in less resources for our school children, and make it more difficult to minimize the impacts of wildfire on our communities.

SRTA supports your continued efforts toward reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act. If you have any questions on the potential impacts to the Shasta Region, please reach out to Executive Director Sean Tiedgen at 530-262-6190 or stiedgen@srta.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Greg Watkins, Chair
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency

Cc: *Federal and/or state representatives (TBD)*



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Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Jesse Arreguin
Member, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Room 6710
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 239 (Arreguin): Open Meetings: Teleconferencing: Subsidiary body.
As Amended on April 7, 2025 – Notice of Support**

Dear Senator Arreguin:

The Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) writes to inform you of our support for Senate Bill (SB) 239, which proposes changes to the Ralph M. Brown Act that would provide flexibility for non-decision-making subsidiary (i.e., advisory) bodies of legislative bodies, to allow for the use of teleconferencing without the need to share their personal and private information.

SRTA is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for the Shasta County region, a mostly rural area of 3,847 square miles, averaging forty-seven persons per square mile in Northern California. SRTA conducts regional transportation planning activities focused on maintaining and improving the region's transportation systems for all users, of all abilities, and all modes of transportation. Our board of directors consists of elected officials from the region's cities, county, and public transit agency. Additionally, SRTA has advisory bodies made up of citizens in our communities who review our transportation plans and programs and provide recommendations to our board of directors to address our region's transportation needs.

These advisory members come from all over our region and represent various groups of protected classes who provide key input and perspective on the transportation needs of our communities. This includes individuals who may experience economic limitations such as low or fixed-income, seniors, persons with a disability, single parents, or may live in rural areas and experience difficulty getting around the region, especially during the winter months due to snow.

The Brown Act requires advisory body members to follow the same rules as decision-making bodies when it comes to teleconferencing into a meeting, including providing their place of participation, posting an agenda at their location, and ensuring the location is available and open to a member of the public to attend. Sometimes these locations may be an advisory body member's private residence. Such requirements do not protect the advisory member's personal and private information and presents barriers to participation in civic duties. It can discourage participation in advisory bodies where the individual's experience, diversity, or expertise provides valuable perspective on addressing transportation needs. It can also present challenges

for legislative bodies, such as SRTA, in recruiting and maintaining representatives of various groups required to be on our advisory bodies.

SB 239 provides a limited exemption under the Ralph M. Brown Act for members of subsidiary non-decision-making bodies to participate remotely. It protects the member's personal and private information, ensures participation, and helps attract and retain members. Additionally, the limited exception still maintains the public's right to access and participate in activities conducted on behalf of the public.

For these reasons, the Shasta Regional Transportation Agency is pleased to support SB 239. Should you have any questions on our position on this matter, please contact Sean Tiedgen, SRTA's executive director at stiedgen@srtc.ca.gov or (530) 262-6190.

Sincerely,

Greg Watkins, Chair
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency

cc: The Honorable [name], Chair, Senate Committee on [committee name]
The Honorable [name], Vice Chair, Senate Committee on [committee name]
Members and staff, Senate Committee on [committee name]
Assemblymember Heather Hadwick, Assembly District 1
Senator Megan Dahle, Senate District 1



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Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Member, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 6630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Senate Bill (SB) 71 (Wiener): California Environmental Quality Act: exemptions: transit projects. As Amended on March 25, 2025 – Notice of Support

Dear Senator Wiener:

The Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) writes to inform you of our support for Senate Bill (SB) 71, which proposes to make current exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for specific transit, bicycle, pedestrian and other transportation plans and projects permanent.

SRTA is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for the Shasta County region, a mostly rural area of 3,847 square miles, averaging forty-seven persons per square mile in Northern California. SRTA conducts regional transportation planning activities focused on maintaining and improving the region's transportation systems for all users, of all abilities, and all modes of transportation. Our board of directors consists of elected officials from the region's cities, county, and public transit agency.

In 2020, the state legislature recognized that exempting active transportation and other similar plans and the projects meant to implement those plans (e.g. restriping of streets and highways, bicycle parking and storage, traffic signal optimization, and related signage) communities saw projects built sooner and more efficiently, and at less cost, resulting in safer and more accessible transportation facilities that benefited our environment. SB 71 now proposes to make those permanent, which benefits rural and urban communities alike.

SB 71 also proposes exemptions for public transportation plans that analyze and support route additions, modifications, or eliminations; microtransit and paratransit services; improvements at stops, stations, and other facilities; and other various services and facilities. These projects ensure quality public transit serves our communities, increase connections to needed services, and expands opportunities for riders. By exempting these projects under CEQA, while including certain parameters for projects exceeding \$50 million and \$100 million, all California citizens will benefit from projects and services that benefit our communities and the environment, while also reducing the costs of these projects, allowing them to be implemented quickly, and using taxpayer dollars effectively.

For these reasons, the Shasta Regional Transportation Agency is pleased to support SB 71. Should you have any questions on our position on this matter, please contact Sean Tiedgen, SRТА's executive director at stiedgen@srta.ca.gov or (530) 262-6190.

Sincerely,

Greg Watkins, Chair
Shasta Regional Transportation Agency

cc: The Honorable [name], Chair, Senate Committee on [committee name]
The Honorable [name], Vice Chair, Senate Committee on [committee name]
Members and staff, Senate Committee on [committee name]
Assemblymember Heather Hadwick, Assembly District 1
Senator Megan Dahle, Senate District 1