



June 19, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California
State Capitol Room 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

First, we want to express our gratitude to Caltrans for its commitment to strong implementation of SB 743 (Steinberg). Caltrans' decision to implement SB 743 on all project types is critical--especially if California wants to address climate change. Transportation is the single largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions; SB 743 provides an opportunity to address those emissions by reducing how much people need to drive.

SB 743 can also help elevate community priorities from rural communities, including flexible shared rides, micro mobility and other solutions that increase mobility and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). While rural communities' land use patterns are less dense than urban areas; many residents in these communities have identified the need for transportation projects that reduce VMT and provide direct benefits. Innovative projects, like Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability's [Van Y Vienen](#), would thrive under SB 743. This project provides electric vehicles for ride-sharing in two unincorporated communities in Western Fresno that lack grocery stores and medical clinics. Many residents in these communities—who were unable to afford cars—now have an option to get to essential services that does not increase VMT or force them to spend funds that they may not have on a car, gas, and automobile maintenance. These are the types of projects that are needed—those that reduce VMT and increase accessibility. SB 743 would make it easier to invest in these types of projects for rural communities.

SB 743 is under threat from many interests who want to delay this law. In response to this effort to delay SB 743, we wanted to share the following points:

1. **California cannot delay SB 743 implementation.** Entities such as the California Building Industry (CBI) are asking for a one to two year delay of SB 743. Many of the issues CBI and others have raised around SB 743 are founded on speculation. Cities and counties will not understand the impact of SB 743—or how to address those impacts—unless this law is implemented. And, as evidenced by laws such as SB 375 as well as Caltrans' current SB 743 implementation, the state can work with agencies, entities, community residents, and nonprofits to develop a process to address any issues that arise from SB 743. The state could even create a SB 743 statewide advisory

committee to flag any issues that arise from SB 743 implementation, and commit to a process to work through them.

2. **SB 743 cannot bear the burden of California's affordable housing crisis for low-income communities and communities of color.** The issues that have been raised by [CBIA](#), namely that SB 743 will add to the cost of housing, or entities such as The Two Hundred's concerns that SB 743 will [hurt low-income communities and communities of color](#) are either speculative or simply untrue.

Residents in low income communities and communities of color should not have to choose between affordable housing and how much time it takes them to get to and from work. Ceding to the arguments from The Two Hundred would create this dichotomy; low-income communities and communities would be forced to bear the burden of longer commutes—and spending more of their limited income on transportation—because greenfield development would be their only opportunity for home ownership. They have the right to live where they choose. More importantly, California should not aid in efforts of [re-segregation](#), where low-income communities and communities of colors are pushed to the exurban fringe because that is the only place where they can afford homes. Finally, low-income communities and communities cannot continue to suffer from historic disinvestment because their cities and towns are developed on the outskirts—which stretches infrastructure and transportation dollars that much more. Delaying SB 743 could perpetuate these historic inequities.

SB 743 must work in tandem with other policies to address the concerns of low-income communities and communities of color. SB 743 will make it easier to build developments within existing communities—and even create incentives for developments that meet certain criteria to provide benefits for these communities such as affordable units or local hire. It can also make it easier for local and regional agencies to invest in more innovative transportation solutions such as ride sharing and micro mobility, which can increase accessibility for residents who do not own a car.

However, SB 743 is not a panacea. California needs to invest in a number of policies to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color have access to the housing they want. Making it easier to create community land trusts, ensuring sustainable funding sources for affordable housing, developing strong tenant protections, and advancing legislation such as AB 1279 (Bloom) which promotes housing production in high-opportunity areas—these are the solutions that must be implemented alongside SB 743. Partnering with statewide housing groups such as Public Advocates is also essential to advance holistic housing and transportation solutions.

- 3. Caltrans and other state agencies must ensure that there is strong community engagement at the local level.** SB 743 cannot be developed without community engagement. Many special interest groups are attempting to speak on behalf of local communities, and that is not what local communities need. They need robust inclusive processes that allow their voices and priorities to be heard and reflected in the final outcome. The Two Hundred and CBIA have resources to reach legislators and state agencies; however many smaller, more rural communities do not. Organizations such as Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, California Rural Legal Assistance, Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton, and others are working directly with local communities in these smaller, more rural communities. They must be a part of the conversations, and decision-making process. Engagement with communities must be meaningful, comply with language access law, and be coordinated with local agencies and community members.

Including residents in the conversation would demonstrate that the state understands residents must be a part of the process of implementing SB 743 and shaping their own community. Including residents will also make sure that SB 743 results in meaningful change and investment opportunities in their communities. If state agencies, such as Caltrans, are relying on the Council of Governments (COG) and other agencies to conduct the public outreach, it is important that the state is checking the work of COGs to make sure these organizations and communities' voices are heard. This includes making sure workshops are being conducted to gather information, and asking who was a part of the workshops. It also includes developing partnerships with state and local organizations to make sure those voices are heard and informing SB 743 implementation.

We need both--we cannot continue to delay SB 743 and perpetuate historic inequities in these communities. We also cannot implement SB 743 without centering those who are most impacted.

Best,

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