

Date of Hearing: May 19, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 550 (Chiu) – As Amended April 22, 2021

Policy Committee: Transportation Vote: 13 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes a pilot program in cities throughout California to allow the use of “speed safety systems,” meaning, generally, automated systems such as camera-like devices to detect speeding violations. Specifically, this bill establishes a five-year pilot program that allows a local transportation authority in the following cities to install speed safety systems: Los Angeles, Oakland, San Jose, two unspecified southern California cities and the City and County of San Francisco.

The bill includes provisions to limit the financial burden imposed by the use of speed safety systems. For example, the bill sets the fee for appealing a violation in superior court at \$25. The bill also requires a city to reduce fines and penalties for indigent persons and to offer such persons community service in place of penalty and installments plans, with monthly payments of no more than \$25. In addition, the bill prohibits the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) from suspending or revoking the violator’s driving privilege and from assigning points against the violator’s driving record.

The bill also requires a city to use revenues from violations to recover program costs and defines those costs to include construction of traffic calming measures, installation of speed safety systems, adjudication of violations and reporting requirements. In addition, the bill requires a participating city to maintain historic levels of funding for traffic-calming measures.

The bill ends the authorization for the pilot programs on of January 1, 2027. Any city that used speed safety systems, per the pilot program, must submit to the transportation committees of the Legislature an evaluation of the speed safety systems in its respective jurisdiction to determine both the effect on safety and local economics.

FISCAL EFFECT:

No state costs, as all authority provided in this bill is to cities. However, this bill has the primary purpose of creating a pilot program and, therefore, consistent with the committee’s rules, is a candidate for the committee’s suspense file.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Background and Purpose.** Use of cameras and similar “automatic traffic enforcement systems” to detect traffic violations is controversial. For this reason, California law limits the

use of cameras and the like to railroad crossings and intersections to detect the running of red lights.

AB 2363 (Friedman), Chapter 650, Statutes of 2018, established the Zero Traffic Fatality Task Force (Task Force) to develop policies to reduce traffic fatalities to zero in California. The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) formed the 25-member Task Force in 2019, which includes representatives from the California Highway Patrol, the University of California and other academic institutions, Caltrans, the State Department of Public Health, local governments, bicycle safety organizations, statewide motorist service membership organizations, transportation advocacy organizations and labor organizations. In January 2020, CalSTA, in conjunction with the Task Force, released the *CalSTA Report of Findings: AB 2363 Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force*. The report includes dozens of recommendations, among them that California consider the use of automated speed enforcement systems to enforce speed limits.

The author contends automated speed enforcement systems, which the bill refers to as “speed safety systems” have proven effective in jurisdictions outside California at increasing traffic safety and reducing traffic-related injury and death. According to the author:

Every year for the past five years, over 1,000 Californians have died in speed-related traffic collisions. Tens of thousands more have been injured. Many jurisdictions have adopted Vision Zero policies in an effort to bring traffic fatalities to exactly that – zero. Unfortunately, existing traffic safety initiatives have not significantly reduced preventable injuries and deaths on our streets. AB 550 proposes a pilot program to bring to California a speeding reduction technology that has already proven effective in dozens of other jurisdictions: speed safety systems. These systems have been proven – time and time again – to reduce speeding by as much as 65 %, and reduce serious injury and fatal crashes by as much as 58 %. The bill sets out a collaborative model based on stakeholder and community engagement, and incorporates clear privacy and equity protections from the outset. This legislation is about saving lives and improving the safety of some of the most vulnerable travelers, like children going to school, bicyclists heading to work, or elderly people running errands. We must remember those whom we have lost, but also take action to protect people we know we can save. AB 550 is a step in that direction.

- 2) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is supported by many local governments, transportation planning agencies and neighborhood-based organizations that note the significant uptick in traffic accidents and fatalities. These supporters argue, as does the National Safety Organization, that “ensuring speed adherence in high risk areas through automated enforcement can save lives.”

The bill, as heard in the Assembly Committee on Transportation, is opposed by California Conference Board of the Amalgamated Transit Union, California Teamsters Public Affairs Council, California Walks and the Western States Trucking Association. According to California Walks:

We can't build safe streets through punitive measures like ticketing, nor through power and dominance like community surveillance. As Californians and statewide advocates, we all must work to promote local and state policies that are people-friendly, equitable, and protect our most vulnerable road users. We must continue to work with local agencies to address the root cause of speeding, and work with local residents to create lasting change through community-driven infrastructure solutions and safety education programs that center collaboration and community expertise.

The author reports his office has drafted amendments that remove the opposition of the Teamsters; however, at the time this analysis was prepared, the committee had not received a letter from the Teamsters indicating the organization had changed its position on the bill.

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