

ASSEMBLY BILL 550 (CHIU)

SAFE STREETS AND WORK ZONES ACT OF 2021

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 550 protects the safety of vulnerable travelers and workers on California roads by giving local transportation authorities and the state the option of creating speed safety pilot programs informed by a stakeholder-driven process under the auspices of the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency.

BACKGROUND

From 2005 to 2014, 363,606 Americans [were killed](#) in instances of traffic violence nationwide. Of those, 112,580 people – 31 percent – were killed in speeding-related incidents. California is no exception to the scourge of speeding fatalities: over 1,000 Californians have [died](#) in speed-related traffic collisions every year for the past five years.

In addition, work crews in state and local work zones face incredibly dangerous working conditions. Workers face a high risk of being injured or killed by distracted or speeding drivers – and many have been struck and killed in the line of duty. The number of active work zones has increased in recent years due to an influx of transportation project funds. The state has undertaken additional safety campaigns, but many sites are still very dangerous.

Jurisdictions suffering from high levels of avoidable fatal and severe collisions are desperate for additional tools to bring the number of traffic deaths down to zero. Vision Zero traffic safety initiatives underway in these localities have made some progress, but these efforts to date have not brought about the necessary reductions in injuries and deaths.

Many streets with the highest incidents of fatal and severe crashes are in regionally-identified Communities of Concern, where a high percentage of households with minority or low-income status, seniors, people with limited English proficiency, and people with disabilities reside and are

disproportionately impacted. Children going to school, pedestrians and cyclists heading to work, and seniors attending to errands are at risk every day.

Vision Zero efforts have historically focused on a traditional law enforcement response to speeding and other dangerous driver behaviors, as well as education and engineering efforts. However, these traditional enforcement methods have had a well-documented disparate impact on communities of color, and implicit or explicit racial bias in police traffic stops puts drivers of color at risk. Jurisdictions around the state are seeking alternatives to traditional enforcement mechanisms that will protect public safety while being responsive to community concerns.

THE PROBLEM

Across the United States, numerous peer-reviewed [studies](#) have shown that speed detection systems reduce the number of severe and fatal collisions by as much as 58 percent. Despite an established history, California law currently prohibits the use of these systems.

Studies have shown that speed is the *leading* factor when determining fault in fatal and severe collisions, yet existing efforts have not led to the reduction in speed and traffic violence needed to save lives and make communities safe. California must provide communities with the option to pilot this public safety tool in order to create the expectation of regular speed checking on the most dangerous streets, and in workzones where traffic work crews are in dangerous proximity to fast-moving vehicles.

THE SOLUTION

AB 550 directs the Secretary of CalSTA to bring together a stakeholder working group to establish program guidelines for the piloting of two speed

safety programs: one on dangerous local streets, and the other in active state or local work zones.

Pilot programs must comply with the following specific requirements in order to operate:

- **Program Operation:** Must be operated by a jurisdiction’s transportation department or similar administrative agency.
- **Privacy Protections:** Jurisdiction must adopt a policy setting out clear restrictions on the use of data and provisions to protect, retain, and dispose of that data. Data from a system cannot be used for any other purpose or disclosed to any other person or agency except as required by law or in response to a court order or subpoena.
- **Facial Recognition Ban:** Jurisdictions are prohibited from using facial recognition technology in a program.
- **Citation Type:** Citations are civil in nature, not criminal, and shall not result in a point on a driver’s record.
- **Fine Amount:** The total penalty amount, including fees, is capped at \$125.
- **Adjudication:** Jurisdictions must provide for a hearing and appeal process for contesting citations.
- **Equity:** Jurisdictions must offer a low-income driver diversion program with specified alternative remedies in lieu of payment and reduced fines for qualifying individuals.
- **Oversight and Evaluation:** Each jurisdiction must submit a report and evaluation to the Legislature within two years of the start of the program and annually thereafter. Reports must include a specific analysis of racial equity and financial impacts of programs developed in collaboration with stakeholder groups.
- **Sunset:** The Act and any authorized programs sunset on January 1, 2027.

The working group, informed by collaboration with stakeholders and experts, will establish additional guidelines in certain areas, including system placement, speed thresholds, warning phases prior to deployment, and community engagement.

SUPPORT

City of Los Angeles (cosponsor)
City of Oakland (cosponsor)
City of San Francisco (cosponsor)
City of San Jose (cosponsor)
Walk San Francisco (cosponsor)
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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