

SB 743: Rethinking How We Build so Californians Can Drive Less



California is a global leader in the fight against the devastating effects of climate change. And there's good news: we have met our 2020 climate goals—mainly because of our dramatic progress in switching to renewable energy. The next big challenge is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by transportation—while improving health, equity and quality of life.

Senate Bill 743 changed the way agencies analyze transportation improvements and development projects in our communities so Californians can drive less. The goal is more communities where we can travel shorter distances during our daily routines, spending less time behind the wheel. The main strategies:

- Streamline development projects that address the affordable housing crisis and deliver walkable, livable neighborhoods.
- Promote building in locations where there are alternatives to driving alone, in cities and towns of all sizes.
- Support walking, bicycling and transit use.
- Move more people with fewer cars, so we're not stuck in traffic.

Implementing SB 743 will complement other State strategies, such as shifting to zero-emission vehicles, when driving is the right choice.

Focus on Community

SB 743 changes the process in CEQA that we use to measure the environmental impacts of projects by measuring how many new miles of car travel the project's residents, visitors, shoppers and employees will produce. Measuring vehicle miles traveled (VMT) takes into account whether a new development is located close to jobs, businesses and services that enable short trips and travel choices besides driving alone.

VMT changes transportation analysis from measuring the impact of a proposed project on drivers, to measuring the impact of driving on the community. This change does not alter the State's commitment to the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation program that was approved as part of SB 1.

"This change gives cities and the State a new tool to address... achieving climate action targets, increasing livability and access, and relieving the affordable housing crisis... Measuring VMT is the appropriate tool to review land use projects on the basis of transportation efficiency and its close association with reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

—California City Transportation Initiative, the Cities of Long Beach, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco

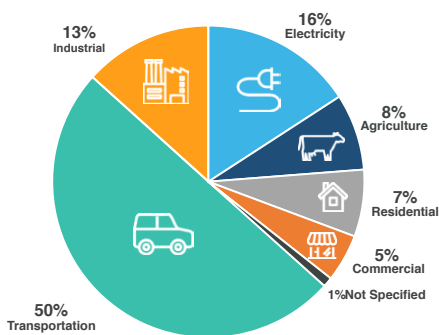
Why We're Making the Change

The ways we have studied traffic have been focused solely on car use and often resulted in unintended outcomes that are out of step with California's vision for the future. We have been measuring whether a new development or transportation investment would cause traffic delays during rush hour. But rush hour congestion doesn't really tell us if the transportation system is efficiently getting as many people as possible to the places they need to go.

If a proposed development project would make congestion worse, the owner of the project was required to pay fees (called mitigation) to, for example, help widen an intersection. Projects in areas that were already congested—even if the project provided community benefits, new housing or retail space—often triggered a need for expensive mitigation.

Developers often reduced the number of housing units in a development to reduce anticipated congestion, and sometimes entire housing projects just became too expensive to build. The cost of mitigation often became an incentive to build in outlying areas where there was less concern about congestion—which unintentionally reinforced auto dependency, creating longer commutes and higher transportation costs.

Moving away from auto dependency is a big challenge—with big benefits.



Combat Climate Change.

Transportation causes half of California's GHG emissions (when including refining fossil fuels for vehicles). Better fuel efficiency, cleaner fuels and more zero emission vehicles will reduce GHG emissions. But not quickly enough. Dramatically reducing our dependence on autos is essential to meet California state law and reduce GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030—a huge gain in our fight against climate change.

+8,000

Save more than 8,000 lives a year lost to disease related to inactive lifestyles, by improving bicycle and pedestrian lanes and paths—which leads to better health when people make the choice to walk or bike just 20 minutes a day.

+5,400

Save more than 5,400 lives each year by reducing particulate pollution coming from tailpipes, tires and brake debris. Residents near freeways, often lower-income, continue to be exposed to high levels of pollution.

Reduce crash fatalities through roadway safety analysis and incentives for local Roadway Safety and Vision Zero plans.



Heal communities and repair past injustices. Many previous transportation decisions quite literally put up barriers, divided communities and amplified racial inequalities, particularly in our Black and Brown neighborhoods.

Spend more time with families, participate in more school events and community groups—spending less time behind the wheel and more time doing the things we love.



With SB 743 in place, California will be at the forefront of innovative and creative strategies for transportation, protecting our environment and improving our quality of life.