



March 19, 2025

The Honorable Lori Wilson
 Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee
 Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 612 - OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED

Dear Chair Wilson,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong opposition to **AB 612 unless amended to account for the complexities of public safety.** As written, the bill prioritizes fire department response times as the primary safety metric in the conversation about road improvement projects. This one-dimensional approach

overlooks critical public safety trade-offs and risks exacerbating the traffic safety crisis that claims over 4,000 lives in California each year and is our state's #1 cause of preventable death: motor vehicle crashes.

Safety analysis focused solely on response time is often cited to oppose road and street safety improvements like lane reductions, lane narrowing, or bike lanes. Yet, evidence from implemented road diets suggests that these projects do not hinder emergency response but do significantly decrease crash rates. Roads with 10–12-foot lanes and 30-35 mph speed limits experience significantly more collisions than those with 9-foot lanes.¹ A narrow focus on response times fails to account for such nuances. Our emergency response and traffic safety goals can align if projects are evaluated for ***all safety elements***. Infrastructure solutions like signal preemption and dedicated bus lanes, for instance, can improve both emergency response times and overall road safety.

There is no accepted methodology for determining "response times" nor evaluating the impact of roadway projects on these response times. Expanding the purview of Fire Department's Fire Prevention Teams thrusts them into the realm of transportation modeling and roadway policy. Fire Departments are not going to be able to collect traffic data and do delicate transportation modeling, nor should they be expected to. Fire Departments do not have the expertise nor should they have to expend limited resources being involved in determining response times.

AB 612's narrow focus not only overlooks crucial road safety, but also overlooks the safety of emergency responders. Motor vehicle crashes are the second leading cause of death for on-duty firefighters, representing 20-25% of annual deaths.² Over 75% of these crashes involve a collision with a passenger vehicle. By facilitating faster roadway speeds for emergency vehicles through an emphasis on response times, AB 612 has the potential to also increase roadway speeds for *all* vehicles. Since higher speeds increase driver reaction time and extend braking distances, AB 612 could raise the likelihood of collisions between emergency vehicles and passenger cars. This potential increase in collisions not only poses a risk of death or injury to emergency responders but also creates potentially life-threatening delays for those in need of emergency assistance.

¹ Johns Hopkins University. (2023). Narrowing travel lanes: Effective strategies for safer streets. Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg American Health Initiative.

² Donoughe, K., Whitestone, J., & Gabler, H. C. (2012). Analysis of firetruck crashes and associated firefighter injuries in the United States. *Annals of advances in automotive medicine*. Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine. Annual Scientific Conference, 56, 69–76.

We urge amendments to AB 612 that take a more comprehensive view of public safety, ensuring that our streets are designed to protect all road users while maintaining efficient emergency response.

Questions regarding this letter and our opposition may be addressed to Kirsten Bladh at kirsten@streetsforall.org | 513 328 3814.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Bladh, Associate Director of State Policy
Streets For All

Jared Sanchez, Policy Director
CalBike

Chloé Lauer, Executive Director
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition

Kara Vernor, Executive Director
Napa County Bicycle Coalition

Eris Weaver, Executive Director
Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition

Sharlene Liu, Chair
Sunnyvale Safe Streets

Colin Fiske, Executive Director
Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities

Ben Gerhardtstein
Walk Bike Berkeley

Ross Pringle, Communications Director
Claremont Streets for People

Eli Kaufman, Executive Director
Bike LA

Tarrell Kullaway, Executive Director
Marin County Bicycle Coalition

Anne Wallach Thomas, Executive Director
Shasta Living Streets

Kevin Shin, Co-Executive Director
California Walks

George Spies, Co-Director
Traffic Violence Rapid Response

Justin Hu-Nguyen, Co-Executive Director
Bike East Bay

David Diaz, Executive Director
Active San Gabriel Valley

Chris Hwang, Board President
Walk Oakland Bike Oakland

Colin Bogart, Group Representative
Pasadena Complete Streets Coalition

Laura Keenan, Co-Founder & Chair
Families for Safe Streets San Diego

Heather Deutsch, Executive Director
MOVE Santa Barbara County

Kevin Dalley
Transport Oakland

Shawn Danino
Prohousing Democratic Caucus of CA

Robin Pam, Co-founder
KidSafe SF

Jodie Medeiros, Executive Director
Walk San Francisco

Laura Tolkoﬀ, Transportation Policy Director
SPUR

David Levitus, Executive Director
LA Forward

Christopher White, Executive Director
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

Eli Lipmen, Executive Director
Move LA