

## CALIFORNIA

# Senate Bill 288

## What It Means for the Transportation Market

[Senate Bill 288 \(California Environmental Quality Act: exemptions: transportation-related projects\)](#) was introduced in June by State Senator Scott Wiener. The state assembly passed the bill in August 2020 and [Governor Newsom signed it into law on September 28](#). Our California Transportation team has been keeping a close eye on this bill's progress through the Senate, and what it means for projects in our communities.

### Summary

Senate Bill (SB) 288 promotes more environmentally friendly transportation options while also working to stimulate the economy and job growth. It exempts a broad range of California transit, bike, and pedestrian projects from CEQA, including:



- Safer streets for walking and biking
- Updated and new transit stations
- Faster and/or more efficient bus service with new bus rapid transit lines
- Bridge repairs
- Installation of new zero emission vehicle charging infrastructure
- Construction of light-rail lines and stations in the public right of way

Allowing targeted exemptions from CEQA would expedite implementation of these projects and significantly reduce the chances that projects will be appealed or litigated. To qualify for exemption, projects must be located in an existing public right-of-way, must not add new auto capacity, must not demolish affordable housing, and must use a skilled and trained workforce or have a project labor agreement in place for construction.

For projects valued at above \$100,000,000, SB 288 requires:

- Expanded public participation requirements to ensure community engagement, requiring at least three public meetings early in the project planning process
- Preparation of a business case that would be presented to local communities to shape project goals and alternatives throughout the planning process
- Completion of racial equity analyses coupled with mitigation proposals to address any disproportionate burdens

## What It Means to Your Community

Many transit and transportation projects will benefit from an expedited planning and development process that is exempt from CEQA, focusing on engaging stakeholders in project planning in a more meaningful and interactive way than ever before. In addition, agency budgets set aside for CEQA review and potential lawsuits would be freed up for other uses within your community.

## ESA Is Ready

In anticipation of the passing of SB288, ESA has been proactively reviewing existing and upcoming projects with our clients to assess how it may affect current CEQA requirements. We are **undertaking a number of operational changes** that will allow us to better support the increased public engagement, racial equity, and business case provisions that SB 288 will mandate. Internally, we have bolstered our efforts on company-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative, giving all staff access to education that strengthens our ability to properly assist clients with the evaluation and achievement of social and environmental justice objectives.

If you would like know more about SB 288 and what it may mean to your project in particular, please reach out to **Julie Watson** or **Ryan Todaro**.



### **Julie Watson**

Principal Project Manager,  
Energy & Transportation

[jwatson@esassoc.com](mailto:jwatson@esassoc.com)

(707) 796-7004



### **Ryan Todaro**

Program Manager,  
Community Development

[rtodaro@esassoc.com](mailto:rtodaro@esassoc.com)

(213) 599-4316