

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BILL ANALYSIS

AMENDMENT DATE: July 7, 2011
POSITION: Neutral, note concerns
SPONSOR: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

BILL NUMBER: AB 348
AUTHOR: J. Buchanan

BILL SUMMARY: Highways: Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone

This bill would allow, until January 1, 2017, the designation of a Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone (DFZ) on a segment of Vasco Road in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, upon approval by the Alameda and Contra Costa county boards of supervisors. Additionally, this bill would require the counties, in consultation with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), to jointly conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the DFZ and report the findings to the Legislature by January 1, 2016.

FISCAL SUMMARY

This bill would result in minor and absorbable costs to Caltrans to consult with the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa on a report on the effectiveness of the DFZ.

Any of the additional fine revenue resulting from this bill would be collected and retained at the local level.

COMMENTS

The Department of Finance is neutral on this bill; however, we note the following concerns:

- This bill does not provide conditions for establishing a DFZ on a local road. Absent any guidelines or criteria, this bill could encourage other local communities to establish DFZs through legislative enactment in the absence of data justifying the need, which could result in DFZs being used as tools to generate revenue at the local level.
- Existing reports have been inconclusive as to the effectiveness of DFZs in reducing the number of traffic accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Analyst/Principal (0751) M. Tollefson	Date	Program Budget Manager Mark Hill	Date
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Department Deputy Director	Date
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Governor's Office:	By:	Date:	Position Approved _____
			Position Disapproved _____

BILL ANALYSIS Form DF-43 (Rev 03/95 Buff)

J. Buchanan

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AB 348

ANALYSIS

A. Programmatic Analysis

Current law establishes the conditions for designating a Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone (DFZ) on the state highway system. A DFZ may be established if the segment of highway has a rate of total collisions and a rate of head-on collision per mile that is at least 1.5 times the statewide average for similar roadways during the most recent three-year period. Additionally, current law requires the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), every two years, in consultation with the California Highway Patrol (CHP), to certify that the highway segment meets the aforementioned criteria. There is currently no process for establishing a DFZ on a local road.

Current law also authorizes the designation of a segment of Vasco Road as a DFZ until January 1, 2010, and required Caltrans to evaluate the effectiveness of the DFZ and recommend to the Legislature whether the DFZ should be reauthorized.

This bill would reauthorize, until January 1, 2017, the designation of a DFZ on a segment of Vasco Road in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, upon approval by the Alameda and Contra Costa county boards of supervisors. Additionally, this bill would require the counties, in consultation with Caltrans, to jointly conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the DFZ and report the findings to the Legislature by January 1, 2016.

Discussion: DFZs are intended to improve traffic safety on roadways with particular safety problems by imposing higher traffic fines as a deterrent to the unsafe driving practices that contribute to a high collision rate. The author's office indicates that there have been significant traffic injuries and fatalities along this segment of Vasco Road, thus necessitating the need for this designation. While the counties of Contra Costa and Alameda are in the process of making some road improvements, there is insufficient funding to complete all phases.

Chapter 179, Statutes of 2006 (SB 3), required Caltrans to submit a report to the Legislature evaluating the effectiveness of the DFZ on Vasco Road. However, because it is a county road, Caltrans' was unable to complete the study and, instead, relied on the CHP's collision data to compare the accident rates on this segment to two or three lane roads on the state highway system. The analysis showed that the collision rate declined at a steady rate from 2004 to 2008 and sharply increased in 2009, but was still significantly higher than the statewide average, which would make it eligible for designation as a DFZ based on the criteria for state highway segments. The head-on collision rate is another metric used to determine if a state highway segment is eligible for designation as a DFZ. From 2004 to 2009, the head-on collision rate remained relatively unchanged, but was lower than the statewide average, which would not meet the minimum requirements for designation as a DFZ if Vasco Road were part of the state highway system.

While prior reports have shown that a reduction in accidents has occurred in some of the DFZs statewide, the reductions have not been statistically significant and Caltrans notes that uncontrolled variables such as roadway improvements and public awareness campaigns have made it nearly impossible to determine if a decrease in collisions was attributable to the doubling of fines. Therefore, existing data has been inconclusive as to the effectiveness of DFZs in reducing the number of traffic accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

B. Fiscal Analysis

This bill would result in minor and absorbable costs to Caltrans to consult with the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa on a report on the effectiveness of the DFZ.

BILL ANALYSIS/ENROLLED BILL REPORT--(CONTINUED)

AUTHOR

AMENDMENT DATE

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Any of the additional fine revenue resulting from this bill would be collected and retained at the local level.

Code/Department Agency or Revenue Type	SO	(Fiscal Impact by Fiscal Year)							Fund Code
	LA	(Dollars in Thousands)							
	CO	PROP							
	RV	98	FC	2011-2012	FC	2012-2013	FC	2013-2014	
2660/Caltrans	SO	No		-----	See Fiscal Summary	-----			0042
<u>Fund Code</u>	<u>Title</u>								
0042	Highway Account, State, STF								