



TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC WORKS POLICY COMMITTEE

Highlights

March 26, 2026

ATTENDANCE

Members: Newell Arnerich (Chair); Andrea Alexander; Robert Armijo; Michael Barrett; Glen Becerra; Priya Bhat-Patel; John Campbell; Jan Clark-Crets; Shannon DeLong; Bob Engler; Mario Enriquez; Jim Ernst; Justin Ezell; Dean Francois; Terry Gaasterland; Shayra Hernandez; Janet Jernigan; Matt Jestser; Katharine Jones; Trish Kelley; Linda Krupa; J.R. Matulac; Jennifer Mendoza; Linda Molina; Paul Nagengast; Adolfo Ozaeta; John Peraza; Christian Punsal; Kristine Scott; Larry Spicer; Fred Strong; Jennifer Torres-O'Callaghan; Alexander Trinidad; Alex Walker-Griffin; Colleen Wallace

Cal Cities Partners: Haig Kartounian

Staff: Damon Conklin, Legislative Advocate
Waleed Hojeij, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst

I. Welcome and Introductions

Following the General Briefing, Chair Newell Arnerich, welcomed committee members; thanks their engagement and emphasized the importance of the League's proactive role in shaping state policy.

Vice-Chair Chelsea Byers was unable to attend, and Chair Arnerich noted that staff would assist with reporting on working group efforts.

II. Public Comment

Chair Arnerich opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was provided.

III. Legislative Update

Cal Cities staff introduced representatives from local Orange County legislative delegation and framed the discussion as an opportunity for early engagement in the legislative process. Cal Cities staff emphasized that many of the bills discussed are still in early stages and that "these are all about conversations," encouraging members to share feedback that can help shape legislation before it advances. Cal Cities staff noted that the League has several months to work with authors and refine proposals, reinforcing the importance of committee input in influencing outcomes.

Colin Edwards, District Director, Assemblymember Ta's office presented AB 2193, addressing enforcement challenges related to autonomous vehicles. He explained that while autonomous vehicles are expanding rapidly across California, current law limits the ability of law enforcement to issue citations because there is no driver present. As a result, violations are often reported to

the DMV without clear consequences. The bill would allow officers to cite the operating company directly, creating financial accountability and improving safety data collection. He acknowledged that while the technology shows promise, there are still safety concerns, noting that “the landscape is kind of murky right now” and that the goal is to ensure these vehicles operate safely as they become more widespread.

Brian DeFranco, Field Representative from Assemblymember Davies' office presented AB 1569, which would require students to complete an e-bike safety training before being allowed to bring e-bikes onto school campuses. He emphasized that the bill is focused on education and safety, particularly for middle and high school students, and allows flexibility for schools to implement programs in a way that works for them. He noted that some districts have already adopted similar approaches with positive feedback and described the goal as “education before access,” ensuring that students understand safe riding practices.

Committee members raised a number of concerns in response to the proposal. Several questioned whether schools are the appropriate entity to implement these programs, with one member stating that “we need to be careful about placing responsibility on schools without providing resources.” Others emphasized that parental responsibility should be central, noting that “this is something that starts at home.” Members also raised equity concerns, pointing out that not all school districts have the same capacity to implement new requirements, and that unfunded mandates could disproportionately impact smaller or under-resourced communities.

Members also questioned whether education alone would meaningfully improve safety outcomes. One member noted that “education is important, but it doesn't necessarily change behavior,” while another emphasized that “without enforcement tools, cities are still left managing the consequences.” Several members highlighted ongoing challenges with unsafe riding behavior, particularly among youth, and expressed concern that legislation may not address the root causes of the issue.

Cooper Strull, District Director, Assemblymember Dixon's office provided additional context on the broader set of e-bike bills being introduced, emphasizing that the Legislature is taking incremental steps to address safety concerns. He noted that recent legislation has focused on restricting access to higher-speed devices for younger riders, limiting aftermarket modifications, and improving device classification. He acknowledged that enforcement remains a significant challenge and shared that discussions are ongoing about ways to better identify devices in the field, stating that “one of the biggest gaps is helping law enforcement quickly identify what these bikes are.”

Overall, the discussion highlighted a shared concern that technology is evolving faster than policy frameworks. Members emphasized that cities are often left managing the impacts without adequate tools or clarity. It was noted by one

committee member, "the technology is moving faster than the policy, and cities are the ones trying to make it work on the ground."

IV. Existing Policy and Guiding Principles: E-Bike Policy

Cal Cities staff presented the process of which the Task Force that was formed to update guiding principles and how the recommended e-bike policy was developed through the working group to strengthen the League's ability to engage on rapidly evolving legislation.

The proposed framework focuses on preserving local authority while establishing clear statewide standards. Key priorities include addressing safety risks associated with higher-speed and modified devices, improving manufacturer accountability, and enhancing enforcement tools.

Members repeatedly highlighted enforcement challenges, noting that local law enforcement often cannot distinguish between compliant and noncompliant devices without stopping riders. One member emphasized that "law enforcement needs tools to identify these devices quickly," while others raised concerns about the growing prevalence of modified e-bikes that function more like motorcycles.

There was strong agreement that e-bikes are here to stay, with one member noting that "the issue is not whether they exist, but how we manage them." At the same time, members cautioned against overregulation and stressed the importance of balancing safety with practical implementation. The committee unanimously approved the recommended e-bike policy for the board to approve.

V. Legislative Agenda

The committee reviewed several bills under the Legislative Agenda and took formal action on each item, including adopting positions and recommending amendments to address city concerns. Discussion across items consistently emphasized enforcement challenges, the need for clear statewide standards, preservation of local authority, and avoidance of unfunded mandates.

AB 1557 (Papan) – E-bike Speed Limits

Cal Cities staff presented AB 1557 (Papan), which redefines an electric bicycle (e-bike) as having an electric motor that is not capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power and a class 1 and 2 e-bike as having a motor that ceases to provide assistance when the bike reaches a peak speed of 16 miles per hour (mph). Members acknowledged the bill's goal of improving safety by lowering speed limits and regulating higher-powered devices. However, significant concerns were raised regarding enforceability and real-world implementation. Members noted that law enforcement already struggles to distinguish between compliant and noncompliant devices, particularly with "grandfathered" bikes, and that additional regulatory complexity could worsen these challenges. The committee recommended amendments to require pedal assist up to 20 mph; limit manufacturing power output to 500 watts; require manufacturer registration

across all classes; and establish clear visual demarcation to allow law enforcement to identify device classifications. The committee voted 23–6 to support, if amended.

AB 1942 (Bauer-Kahan) – E-bike Registration and License Plates

Cal Cities staff presented on AB 1942 (Bauer-Kahan), which would require class 2 electric bicycles and class 3 electric bicycles to be registered with the department and to display a special license plate issued by the department. Members expressed interest in a statewide registration to improve accountability and enforcement but raised concerns about cost, implementation, and equity impacts. The committee recommended amendments to apply the program to all e-bike classifications (Class I, II, and III); establish a clear cap on registration fees; and require unique visual identifiers for each classification to support enforcement. The committee unanimously voted to support, if amended.

AB 1944 (Lee) – Zero-Emission Transit Buses: Axle Weight

Cal Cities staff presented AB 1944 (Lee), which seeks to increase the allowable axle weight limit for zero-emission transit buses. Members acknowledged the importance of advancing zero-emission transit goals but raised significant concerns about the impact of heavier vehicles on local infrastructure. Members emphasized that cities bear primary responsibility for maintaining local streets and that increased axle weights could accelerate pavement deterioration and increase maintenance costs. The committee recommended amendments to require state funding for local governments to offset roadway damage caused by heavier transit vehicles. Members stressed that “cities cannot absorb these costs alone” and that state climate policies must be aligned with infrastructure funding responsibilities. The committee voted 28–1 to oppose unless amended.

SB 1167 (Blakespear) – E-bike Classifications

Cal Cities staff presented SB 1167 (Blakespear), which would add to the kinds of vehicles that do not qualify as electric bicycles or “e-bikes,” including a vehicle with motor power of more than 750 watts; a vehicle capable of attaining speed greater than 20 miles per hour on motor power alone; a vehicle with a motor capable of providing assistance when the vehicle reaches a speed exceeding 28 miles per hour. Members emphasized that clearer distinctions between e-bikes, mopeds, and electric motorcycles are critical for improving safety and enforcement. Members highlighted that classification reforms must be paired with clear labeling and outreach to be effective, noting that “clarity only works if people understand it and enforcement can act on it.” The committee voted unanimously to support this measure.

VI. Existing Policy and Guiding Principles Working Group Update

Cal Cities staff summarized the working group’s efforts to update and modernize the TCPW guiding principles; working to develop recommendations to the TCPW policy committee to add some new policies, eliminate others and make updates to some policies.

VII. State Legislation, Budget, and Regulatory Update

Cal Cities staff provided an overview of priority transportation, public works and utilities legislation, regulations and budget impacts.

Members discussed bills related to emergency response, project delivery methods, and funding allocations. There was strong support for policies that enhance flexibility and recognize the critical role of public works, along with concerns about cost impacts and administrative burdens.

Adjourn

The chair formally adjourned the meeting at 2 p.m.

Next Meeting (Virtual): Thursday, June 4, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.