

# CalBike Executive Director Responds to California's Unprecedented Support for Active Transportation

October 7, 2022

This was an unprecedented year for bike-friendly and active transportation legislation in Sacramento. CalBike worked hard with our members and allies to advocate for bike-friendly measures, and it's clear that our elected officials have heard the message that Californians want safer streets, more space for biking and walking, and strong measures to tackle climate change.

We can't drive ourselves out of the climate crisis; California needs to fundamentally alter its transportation system. The 2022 legislative session shows that our elected leaders recognize the value of bikes and other modes of active transportation to help bring the changes we need. Several new laws will bring vital changes to our communities, reducing pollution, mitigating the effects of climate change, and improving equity and quality of life for all Californians.

## Pedestrians aren't "jays"

Car companies invented the concept of "jaywalking" 100 years ago. At the time, jay was an insulting word for a country bumpkin, and the implication was that country folk were too uneducated to know how to walk on city streets filled with cars. The auto manufacturers did this as part of a PR campaign as sentiment rose against the new vehicles for mowing down children in the streets (something that autos continue to do, but now with sadly little awareness or outrage).

With the governor's signature on [AB 2147](#), the [Freedom to Walk Act](#), California joins a growing movement to decriminalize safe, midblock street crossings. The law leaves jaywalking statutes on the books but will prevent police from ticketing people who cross without endangering themselves or others.

The Freedom to Walk Act won't affect most people's walking behavior: Everybody jaywalks, and that will continue. But it will make the streets safer for Black and Latino Californians, who are disproportionately targeted while walking or biking, sometimes leading to lethal police encounters or economically harmful tickets.

CalBike applauds Assemblymember Phil Ting for writing this bill, and for his unwavering support for passing it into law.

## Planning for the future

CalBike also cosponsored the [Plan for the Future Bill](#), [SB 932](#), which requires a specific change to a somewhat obscure planning document, but the bill will have a tremendous impact on our neighborhoods in the years to come. Cities and counties base their long-term planning decisions

on General Plans, which are only updated every 15 years — sometimes even longer. The changes outlined in General Plans may take years or decades to come to fruition, if they are ever built.

The Plan for the Future Bill requires local governments to update the circulation element of their General Plans (which governs all elements of transportation into and through a community) to include Complete Streets and other features that enhance safety for people walking and biking, and plans must be updated by the middle of 2024. Then they have two years to start building what they have planned, so good ideas don't gather dust. The bill also creates a state fund to help pay for the costs of these changes.

We can't wait decades to create communities where it's safe and appealing to get on a bike or take the bus rather than driving a personal car. The Plan for the Future Bill recognizes this and takes bold action to move California into the future we need. We thank Senator Anthony Portantino for authoring this bill and our friends at Streets for All for cosponsoring it and working with us to pass it.

## Accelerating the speed of change

**SB 922**, which grants permanent CEQA exemption for active transportation infrastructure projects, will help the plans created under SB 932 become reality. The measure extends an exemption granted temporarily during the pandemic.

CEQA, California's environmental review law, is crucial to assessing the potential impacts of construction projects on our fragile environment. However, the law has often been twisted by anti-development forces. A CEQA lawsuit delayed the implementation of San Francisco's bike plan for many years, putting that city's bike riders in harm's way and delaying the shift toward a sustainable transportation system.

SB 922 recognizes that bikeways have a positive impact on the environment by making active transportation safer and enabling more people to choose alternatives to driving. We thank Senator Scott Wiener for his leadership on this issue.

## Bikes belong on California streets

The **OmniBike Bill**, **AB 1909**, makes four essential changes to the California vehicle code:

- Car drivers must change lanes to pass bike riders wherever possible.
- E-bikes, including Class 3 bikes, can't be excluded from most bikeways.
- Cities can't enforce bicycle licensing regulations, which have often been used to harass Black and brown bike riders.
- People on bikes can advance on a walk signal, even if the traffic light is red in their direction.

These changes legalize logical and safe choices for people on bikes, and reduce potential police harassment, discrimination, and pretextual policing. The change lanes to pass provision gives drivers clear direction about how to safely pass bike riders and will make it easier for police to ticket offenders.

This law has a bonus provision because [AB 2264](#), which also became law, gives pedestrians a 3-7 second head start to walk before cars get the green. Called a leading pedestrian interval (LPI), this measure has been shown to reduce accidents involving people walking by up to 60%. Under AB 1909, bikes will be able to advance on the LPI, increasing safety for people on bikes as well.

We thank Assemblymember Laura Friedman, who authored the OmniBike Bill and several other critical active transportation measures, for her leadership on these issues.

## Electric bicycle incentive program takes shape

In 2021, CalBike helped win a budget allocation for an e-bike incentive, similar to the rebates that California offers residents who buy electric cars. This year, we have worked with CARB to provide input to help shape the program. And we have mobilized over 8,000 people who care about the program, which makes e-bikes more affordable for more Californians, to add their voices to the discussion. CARB expects the pilot project to launch by the end of March 2023.

These are just a few highlights from a [historic slate of active transportation](#) bills that became law this year, and CalBike is thrilled with the results. This progress signals rapidly growing support for the transportation mode shift that California needs, not just to EVs but to biking, walking, and transit. We look forward to building on this momentum in 2023 to ensure that all Californians have access to healthy, sustainable transportation options, to safe and welcoming streets, and to joyful, connected, livable communities.

# [Governor Signs SB 932, Plan for the Future Bill](#)

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## **PLAN FOR THE FUTURE BILL SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**

### **SB 932 will accelerate green cities and active transportation**

Sacramento, CA – Today, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed [SB 932](#), the [Plan for the Future Bill](#).

SB 932 requires a county or city to identify high-injury streets and intersections in its General Plan and prioritize safety improvements to reduce traffic collisions.

SB 932 will also create an annual grant program to award funding to help cities implement timely and effective short-term efforts to mitigate bicycle, pedestrian, and other active transportation. The Act mandates that cities and counties begin to implement those plans within two years after the adoption of the new circulation element.

Though California has been leading efforts to create safer streets, traffic deaths have dramatically increased in recent years. In some cities, the most dangerous streets and corridors have been identified, but no plans exist to remedy these deadly situations. In other cases, safety measures detailed in General Plans are never built.

“By putting active transportation safety and access at the center of local planning, SB 932 will create more livable communities in California,” said Jared Sanchez, CalBike Senior Policy Advocate. “And mandating planning for safe active transportation is essential to meeting California’s emissions reduction goals,”

The bill’s author, Senator Portantino, said, “This bill is not just about cyclists; it’s about the safety of everyone who ventures into the public right of way. SB 932 is an effective way to mitigate injuries and fatalities. The Governor’s signature on this important public safety bill will yield positive change for our communities.”

Marc Vukceovich, Co-Director of State Policy at Streets for All, said, “SB 932 is a transformative policy that will require cities and counties to plan for biking and walking as transportation. This bill will also have cities address their high injury networks of streets in a time when roadway fatalities of both drivers and pedestrians are at an all-time high.”

CalBike and Streets for All are sponsors of Senator Portantino’s Plan for the Future Bill.