



Senator Scott Wiener, 11th Senate District

Senate Bill 827 – Zoning Near High-Quality Transit

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 827 establishes an incentive for building housing near high-quality transit by exempting these developments from certain restrictive and low-density zoning standards.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING LAW

Over the past several decades, California has adopted aggressive climate policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollution while stifling new housing construction, particularly new infill housing close to transit. This mismatch of priorities cannot be realigned until we tackle zoning, particularly single family home zoning and other low-density patterns.

Existing law leaves zoning decisions exclusively to local governments, even in areas where high-quality transportation infrastructure receives funding from the state. The Caltrans Strategic Management plan set a goal to double transit ridership between 2015 and 2020, but there is no housing or land use component that is aggressive enough to get us there. Local governments play an outsized role in determining how many Californians have daily, walkable access to public transit.

PROBLEM

The negative impacts of California’s housing shortage threaten our state’s economic growth, environmental well-being, and diversity. It is far too expensive to rent or buy a home in California, which results in displacement, evictions, and families being pushed out as they grow. Teachers, retail workers, first responders, and other middle-income professionals often have crushing commutes as they increasingly cannot afford to live near their jobs or public transportation.

In many communities, restrictive zoning – such as mandating single-family homes – limits the number of Californians who can live near public transportation. These zoning controls are socially exclusive, anti-urban, and in opposition to the state’s adopted climate goals. More and more of California’s high opportunity areas are neighborhoods with high-quality public transit, yet Californians continue to suffer from lack of opportunity and poor air quality because of

exclusionary housing policies. Restrictive zoning near transit often comes in the form of maximums on density, floor area ratio, and height, and results in a select few privileged households having access to our vital urban infrastructure.

SOLUTION

Establishing state minimum zoning near high-quality transit ensures that neighborhoods with transit access will have abundant housing and opportunity in livable communities, and that California’s transit agencies will see increases in ridership. Transit-rich housing parcels are those within 1/2 mile of a major transit stop or 1/4 mile from a high-quality transit corridor – parameters that were set in SB 375 to help plan sustainable communities at the regional level.

A development in a transit-rich housing zone will be exempted from local controls on maximum residential density, maximum floor area ratio, and minimum automobile parking spaces. In addition, if the local government has adopted height maximums that are lower than 45 to 85 feet, depending on the transit access and urban design characteristics of the street, a transit-rich housing project is granted a new, higher height limit to accommodate more homes.

STATUS

- Pending bill referral

CO-AUTHORS

- Assemblymember Phil Ting (Principal)
- Senator Nancy Skinner

SPONSOR

- California YIMBY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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