



September 12, 2025

Governor Gavin Newsom  
 1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
 Sacramento, CA 95814  
 Via email: [leg.unit@gov.ca.gov](mailto:leg.unit@gov.ca.gov)

**Re: AB 697 (Wilson) - Streamlining for Highway Widening – REQUEST FOR VETO**

Dear Governor Newsom:

The undersigned organizations respectfully request that you veto AB 697 by Assembly Member Wilson. This bill will authorize the Department of Fish and Wildlife to issue a permit for incidental take of fully protected species for the widening of State Route 37 between Sears Point and Mare Island. We have serious concerns about this “interim” SR 37 project and are opposed to fast-tracking the development of this climate-harming project at the expense of fully protected species.

We are especially concerned with the dangerous precedent that this bill sets by enabling the SR 37 widening project to take advantage of a CESA streamlining provision in SB 147, which was part of your 2023 Infrastructure Package, that was explicitly not to be used to “increase highway or street capacity for automobile or truck travel”. Given the many hundreds of highway widening projects planned across the state, we believe this bill will send a message to the sponsors of every project that they should pursue the same exemption from environmental protections for their projects.

Second, we have concerns about the fundamental purpose and need for the interim SR 37 project. The interim project will cost roughly \$500 million to widen the roadway at the current level, sections of which are as low as 4-6' above sea level and are projected to be underwater due to sea level rise as soon as 2040. Accounting for the time it will take for construction, the interim project is unlikely to be completed until 2030; meaning the expanded roadway may only be used for 10 years before it is permanently underwater. Further, adding lanes to the roadway will significantly increase driving and emissions, which will accelerate the timeline for putting the project underwater.

It is important to note that Federal transportation funds require at least a 20-year design life for major roadways and structures, which would require any funding gaps or cost overruns on the SR 37 interim project to be borne by the state or locals.

We appreciate that the interim project proposes to improve tidal flow at Tolay Creek, however greater ecological benefits would be achieved by moving forward sooner with the ultimate project. We believe the interim project will actually delay and undermine a long-term solution for travel across the North Bay.

For these reasons, we urge you to veto AB 697 and direct Caltrans to work with local agencies in the North Bay to advance a truly climate-resilient and multimodal solution for travel in the SR 37 corridor.

Sincerely,



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Carter Lavin  
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