
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Jim Beall, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No:	SB 656	Hearing Date:	5/7/2019
Author:	Hueso		
Version:	4/30/2019 Amended		
Urgency:	Yes	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Randy Chinn		

SUBJECT: San Diego-Coronado Bridge: physical suicide deterrent system.

DIGEST: This urgency bill requires Caltrans to establish an advisory committee of specified membership for the San Diego-Coronado Bridge.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law establishes a process for evaluating operations and maintenance projects on state bridges.

This urgency bill:

- 1) Requires Caltrans to establish an advisory committee to provide broad public input on the installation of physical suicide deterrent systems on the San Diego-Coronado Bridge.
- 2) Requires eight members of an advisory committee to be appointed by the Caltrans Director and shall include one representative each from all of the following:
 - a) The County of San Diego
 - b) Law enforcement
 - c) The City of San Diego
 - d) The City of Coronado
 - e) The mental health community
 - f) A local suicide prevention community group
 - g) A resident of the Barrio Logan/Sherman Heights community
- 3) Requires, in addition to the members appointed by the Caltrans Director, the advisory committee shall also include one representative for each Assembly member and State Senator whose district includes the bridge, selected by that

Assembly member and State Senator. The effected districts are Senate Districts 39 and 40 and Assembly Districts 78 and 80.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author Statement.* The Coronado Bridge is recognized as the second most frequently used bridge for suicides in the United States and has had as many as 19 suicides per year. Non-physical measures for suicide deterrence have been implemented on the bridge including signage for suicide counseling hotlines as well as increased presence and monitoring by the California Highway Patrol. More recently, bird spikes were placed on the sides of the bridge in an effort to deter suicides. However, within weeks of their installation, three suicides occurred over a 24-hour period and a fourth attempt was made that same week. Caltrans issued a feasibility report last year outlining the potential options of creating a permanent physical barrier to completely prevent individuals from gaining access to the bridge's edge. Caltrans has stated it may take years to agree, approve and install a barrier on the bridge. Nonetheless, it is critical that the planning process continue to move expeditiously.

Senate Bill 656 will ensure input provided by a broad section of regional stakeholders will help inform the selection process and lead to a decision that best meets the needs of the community. More importantly, this bill will give community stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback as Caltrans continues to review possible long-term solutions to help prevent these lamentable deaths.

- 2) *San Diego-Coronado Bridge.* The San Diego-Coronado Bridge is about two miles long, part of State Route 75 connecting the Logan Heights neighborhood of San Diego with the city of Coronado. It was a toll bridge until 2002, after which tolls were discontinued. The bridge spans San Diego Bay between the mouth of the bay and Naval Base San Diego. Bicycles and pedestrians are not permitted on the bridge.
- 3) *Deterring Suicide.* The bridge has unfortunately become a frequent site for suicide attempts, second only to the Golden Gate Bridge in California. This has come to the attention of Caltrans. In late 2018, Caltrans completed a feasibility study on a number of different suicide deterrent systems. Six primary alternatives were considered with the physical barrier alternatives costing roughly \$100 million. Caltrans has recently begun a process of evaluating the alternatives, selecting a preferred alternative, finding funding, and planning the construction. The community interests are varied and include efficacy at preventing suicides, cost, impact on other transportation projects, view

obstruction, and impact on bridge architecture. The advisory committee established in this urgency bill is intended to represent a broad cross-section of area interests, which will provide input into Caltrans' evaluation process.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

SB 480 (Hueso, 2017) — Required Caltrans, no later than February 1, 2018, to update the Legislature regarding any feasibility studies completed for proposed projects designed to improve safety and mitigate suicide risks on the San Diego-Coronado Bridge. *This bill failed passage in the Assembly Transportation Committee.*

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, May 1, 2019.)

SUPPORT:

(Applicable to the earlier version of the bill)

City of Coronado
Coronado San Diego Bridge Collaborative for Suicide Prevention
County of San Diego
Mental Health America of San Diego County
San Ysidro Health
Turning Point Community Programs

OPPOSITION:

None received.

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