



CITY OF MERCED

MERCED

July 3, 2025

The Honorable Lori Wilson
Chair, Assembly Committee on Transportation
1020 N Street, Suite 112
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 445 (Wiener) Transportation Projects: Permitting.
Notice of OPPOSITION *(As amended 6/30/2025)*

Dear Chair Wilson,

The City of Merced **regretfully must opposes SB 445 (Wiener)**, which seeks to create a new state permitting scheme for local projects that ultimately introduces sweeping and problematic changes that would significantly impair local government's ability to manage public infrastructure, ensure worker and public safety, and coordinate fairly across all critical infrastructure sectors.

SB 445 proposes to drastically alter existing approval and coordination processes by imposing highly prescriptive and impractical timeframes that do not reflect the complexity of infrastructure coordination, environmental review, and public engagement necessary for responsible project delivery. Failure to meet notification and review deadlines results in automatic default decisions, potentially ignoring broader infrastructure impacts or unresolved technical issues. The process removes discretion from local agencies, handing decision-making power to the project proponent and California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) via an unknown arbitrator (whose decision is immune against any appeals process), regardless of local objections or infrastructure risks. This shift effectively sidelines cities in the planning and delivery of infrastructure projects within their own jurisdictions. The result is a near-total erosion of local control over assets we are obligated to maintain and steward on behalf of our communities.

Most concerning, the bill appears to grant project proponents — public or private — total authority to move forward with projects that could significantly alter or relocate critical infrastructure such as water, wastewater, and power systems, within the public right of way, without meaningful consultation or resolution with the affected city. This undermines essential protections for worker safety, service continuity, and environmental integrity.

Our city is responsible for over 500 miles of water lines, 25,000 service connections, and thousands of valves, meters, and hydrants. Any project that interferes with these systems requires coordination and planning to avoid disruptions to residents and emergency services. SB 445 would allow outside project proponents to move forward without that coordination, leaving us with no real way to protect public safety or ensure continuity of service. It takes away the very oversight we rely on to keep our systems running safely and responsibly.



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While we appreciate the desire to expedite certain infrastructure projects, we cannot support legislation that sacrifices thoughtful planning, public safety, and equitable infrastructure prioritization in the name of speed. SB 445, in its current form, is unworkable and sets a dangerous precedent for undermining local authority and infrastructure integrity.

We urge you to make **SB 445 a two-year bill** and work with local governments to craft solutions that balance the need for sustainable transportation improvements with the complex realities of infrastructure coordination and community impact.

For these reasons, the City of Merced regrettably must oppose **SB 445 (Wiener)**.

Sincerely,

Matthew Serratto

Mayor

City of Merced

cc. The Honorable Scott Wiener
Your Senator & Assembly Member
Your League Regional Public Affairs Manager (via email)
League of California Cities, cityletters@cacities.org