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Assemblymember David Chiu and Transit Advocates Announce Legislation to Improve Muni and Make Streets Safer

AB 1287 Will Expand Transit-Only Lane Enforcement Beyond Parking Violations

San Francisco—Assemblymember David Chiu today joined the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) and other transit officials and advocates to announce Assembly Bill 1287 that will reauthorize San Francisco’s Transit-Only Lane Enforcement (TOLE) program and expand it to cover other moving violations that impede or interfere with transit performance and public safety. The goal of the program is to improve transit safety and reliability by discouraging vehicles from obstructing transit-only lanes. Violations include “blocking the box” at congested intersections and driving in designated transit-only lanes.

“Anyone who moves around San Francisco these days, whether on Muni, on foot, on a bicycle or in a car, knows that our streets are incredibly busy and congested,” said Assemblymember David Chiu. “Transit-only lanes are crucial to helping Muni do more than crawl through our congested streets. We need to do everything we can to make the transit-only lanes work, and it makes sense to enhance the program to improve Muni and protect pedestrians.”

With 26 miles of transit-only lanes throughout San Francisco, Muni has seen significant improvement in major corridors, including streets like Sutter, where there has been a 15 percent improvement in travel time. Based on these initial results of the pilot program, the legislation adds blocking the box violations at intersections, driving in transit-only lanes and illegal parking in bus stops throughout the system. All of these violations would be issued as nonmoving violations and administered in the same manner as parking citations.

“San Francisco continues to experience unprecedented growth, and as a result, has an increased demand on our streets,” said San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee. “AB 1287 will reauthorize our City’s transit-only lane enforcement to help make Muni, taxis, shuttles, bikes, and cars move around the City more smoothly and predictably, and can make the streets safer for everyone, particularly pedestrians. I thank Assemblymember David Chiu for sponsoring this legislation and working with me to advance our Vision Zero goals.”

“With more than two dozen miles of transit-only lanes throughout San Francisco, we have made significant progress in how we move Muni in our most congested corridors,” said Ed Reiskin, SFMTA Director of Transportation. “This legislation will allow us to ensure that these transit-only lanes are kept as clear as possible. It also furthers our work to keep our roads safe, reliable and as functional as possible for so many people travelling in San Francisco.”

In 2008, pursuant to AB 101, authored by then-Assemblymember Fiona Ma, the SFMTA initiated a pilot TOLE program to use forward-facing cameras on board buses to protect the City’s transit-only lanes and ensure transit priority. The pilot program was reauthorized in 2011 by AB 1041. With this program, vehicles illegally parked or stopped within a dedicated transit lane have their license plate captured by a video camera on a passing bus, with the registered owner receiving a citation in the mail. This enforcement prevents buses from having to stop or unsafely maneuver around parked cars.

“Transit-only lanes have made a huge difference in neighborhoods throughout our City,” said San Francisco Transit Riders Chair Thea Selby, “In my neighborhood it feels like the dedicated lane has cut in half the amount of time it takes to get down the street on Muni. It’s crucial we make sure that keeping these lanes free for our Muni buses is properly enforced.”

AB 1287 only applies to San Francisco. It is expected to be heard by the Assembly Transportation Committee in April.

Assemblymember David Chiu (D – San Francisco) is the Assistant Speaker Pro Tempore of the California State Assembly and represents the 17th Assembly District, which encompasses the eastern portion of San Francisco.

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