



## SR 37 Traffic Relief and Climate Resiliency Act (Dodd, 2020)

### Summary

Sea level rise and flooding threaten State Route 37 and the Sonoma Creek Bridge requiring immediate action to preserve this critical corridor while also increasing the resiliency of the surrounding environment. Establishing toll authority on SR 37 will assist in providing the necessary revenue to improve the resiliency of this important transportation infrastructure from sea level rise, flooding, congestion, while increasing opportunities for ecological enhancements, transit, multimodal use, and public access.

### Background

State Route 37 (SR37) is a major corridor extending from US 101 in Novato to I-80 in Vallejo. This vital corridor between the counties of Marin, Napa, Sonoma, and Solano connects the North Bay to the rest of the state and serves as a recovery route for the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge in the event of an emergency closure. An estimated 40,000 cars and trucks cross it each day. That number is expected to increase nearly 50 percent, to 58,000 vehicles, over the 20 years. Adaptive action is necessary to ensure SR 37 remains a viable transportation artery for the region.

This corridor is susceptible to extreme congestion 7 days a week, it is surrounded by critical wetlands and habitats including the San Pablo Bay National wildlife Refuge containing 9 special-status species, and is inundated by significant flooding on low-lying sections. In 2017, flooding forced full or partial closures of SR 37 for a total of 27 days and in 2019 flooding

resulted in an additional 8 days of closures. According to a report by the University of California, Davis titled “Adaptive Planning for Transportation Corridors Threatened by Sea Level Rise”, without action, all segments of SR 37 could be exposed to storm surge flooding from a 5- to 10-year coastal storm event by 2050 and by 2100 sea level rise is projected to render SR 37 completely unusable.

Given the significance and immediate need to address these infrastructure issues, affected local entities established a Highway 37 policy committee in 2016 to begin investing in environmental assessments and analysis of project options as a part of stakeholder meetings.

The funding generated would help leverage state and federal funding sources to complete the needed overhaul. Details including administration, matching funds and the design of a new highway will be decided with future public input. Possibilities include an elevated causeway between Sears Point and Vallejo.

### Existing Law

Existing law requires establishing authority, on behalf of the state, to operate, maintain or collect tolls, however, no such authority exists for SR 37.

### This Bill

This bill will create a tolling authority to raise capital for necessary improvements to the Hwy 37, including the Sonoma Creek bridge, the approaches to the bridge between Hwy 121 and

Mare Island, and the corridor, as defined. Revenues from the toll bridge, and any related toll bridge revenue bonds will assist in paying for near-term and long-term improvements improving the roadway's mobility, safety, and long-term resiliency to sea level rise and flooding. The toll authority shall also consult and consider recommendations of Sonoma County Transportation Authority, Solano Transportation Authority, Napa Valley Transportation Authority and the Transportation Authority of Marin regarding plans and projects authorized ensuring regional collaboration. The authority shall approve the initial expenditure plan at a public meeting providing transparency and opportunity for public input. The authority shall establish and maintain toll rates at amounts adequate to generate revenue sufficient to repay revenue bonds only after holding public meetings on the proposed toll rates. Similar to other bridge tolls, the authority shall include an equity program with discounts and premiums to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Support

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