A ROAD BLOCK FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

ALEXIS RUBALCABA



According to data as of 2025, in Los Angeles 89% of bus riders have a household income of less than $50k and almost 80% of these individuals do not have access to a car. Additionally, many of the riders tend to experience a delay time when riding a bus due to overcrowding, lack of bus lanes, or traffic. Senator Laura Richardson, a Democrat from District 35, approaches the board of Local Government and Labor to introduce Senate Bill 51, the Clean Affordable Transit Act.

SB-51 aims to make public transit more affordable, accessible, and environmentally clean for all the communities throughout California. "*I believe that someone's income, or where they live, should not determine their ability to access essential services or opportunities.*" Senator Richardson opens her argument. SB-51 would offer funding to local transportation agencies to produce different fairs for individuals who qualify as low income with the help of Caltrain. Additionally, it will offer the ability to create more routes that go into underserved communities. 40% of SB-51's funding will go to green transportation improvement to update the vehicles and offer to build electric bus stations. Senator Richardson goes on to argue, "*We are not simply investing in transportation, we are investing in opportunity, economic mobility, and a cleaner future for California.*" A citizen who uses public transit in Los Angeles stands as a witness and in support of SB-51. The witness recounts the challenges many communities face with accessing public transit and the low-income communities that face air pollution, arguing that SB-51 provides help. Chair Smallwood-Cuevas asks for clarification on SB-51's budget and plans with where the cutting of funds plans to happen. Senator Richardson does respond that the allocation would come from the Caltrain's budget. Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh speaks on the matter claiming the bill to be "*contradicting itself*". Chair Smallwood–Cuevas does find that the bill would not actually encourage more individuals to ride transportation. With the votes coming in, SB-51 fails with 1 aye vote, 2 nays, 3 abstains, and 5 members absent from the board. The bill's failure leaves questions about how the state will address transportation affordability, accessibility, and environmental inequality moving forward.