



May 13, 2025

The Honorable Anna Caballero
 Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
 State Capitol, Room 412
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 79 (Wiener) Transit-oriented Development
Notice of Opposition**

On behalf of the undersigned cities along Metro’s planned [Southeast Gateway Line](#) and Metro’s planned [Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project](#), we write to express our strong opposition to SB 79 (Wiener), which would disregard state-certified housing elements and bestow land use authority to transit agencies without any requirement that developers build housing, let alone affordable housing.

While we appreciate and respect the author’s desire to pursue a housing production proposal, SB 79 does so in a manner that undermines local control and disregards cities’ general plans. Local control is not a barrier to progress — it is the foundation of thoughtful, effective community-led planning. In fact, many cities along the planned 14.5-mile Southeast Gateway Line and 9-mile extension of the Metro E Line have spent years developing comprehensive plans to help guide land use around the proposed light rail Metro station. For example, the following cities have spent years developing specific plans to support transit-oriented development that balance growth with infrastructure, environmental sustainability, public safety, and community character:

- The City of Artesia has been working on their [Artesia Downtown Specific Plan](#) for nine years;
- The City of Commerce’s [Transit-Oriented Development and Displacement Avoidance Plan](#) took nearly one year to adopt and included three listening sessions with residents and community stakeholders;
- The City of Downey’s [Rancho Los Amigos South Campus Specific Plan](#), which was recently amended in January 2025, was the result of a five-year effort initiated in 2016 and formally adopted in 2021 following extensive community engagement, environmental review, and interagency coordination;

- Approved in 2014, the City of La Mirada's [Imperial Highway Specific Plan](#) is now being implemented with the recent approval of the City's first mixed-use project—a 42-unit development featuring live-work units and residential townhomes;
- The City of Paramount's [North Paramount Gateway Specific Plan](#) took three years to adopt;
- The City of Pico Rivera has been working on the [Washington Boulevard Transit-Oriented Development Specific Plan](#) since 2019, with an anticipated completion date in 2025;
- The City of Vernon engaged stakeholders for three years in the development of the [Westside Specific Plan](#), that resulted in a rezoning to allow for residential and mixed-use residential developments by-right; and,
- In 2021, the City of Whittier [upzoned](#) to Mixed Use 3 around the proposed light rail Metro station in preparation for the extension of the Metro E Line.

These comprehensive plans are informed by extensive community engagement and retain local review and discretionary approval, which are vital for ensuring compatibility with infrastructure, services, and the needs of the community.

SB 79 overrides these community-led plans with state-driven top-down mandates that diminish the voices of residents, local planners, and local elected officials who understand their community best. This latest overreaching effort forces cities to approve transit-oriented development projects near specified transit stops — up to seven stories high and a density of 120 homes per acre — without regard to the community's needs, environmental review, or public input. Transit agencies would have the power to determine all aspects of development, including height, density, and design, without community input. This broad new authority applies to both residential and commercial development. Transit agencies could develop 100 percent commercial projects — even at transit stops — and not provide a single new home, while simultaneously making the argument that more housing must be constructed around transit stops.

Gateway Cities have already engaged with the author on similar legislation

Cities along the Southeast Gateway Line and the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project have limited land availability and are among the region's densest communities. The Gateway Cities region is approximately 3.5 times denser than Los Angeles County and 33 times denser than California. In July 2019, Cal Cities partnered with various cities in the Gateway Cities Council of Governments region to educate Senator Wiener (D-San Francisco) former Chair of the Senate Housing Committee on the unique density, demographic, environmental, transit-related, socio-economic and economic factors that affect land-use and housing in the region. The intent of the driving tour was to demonstrate that “one-size-fits-all” legislative proposals like [SB 50 \(Wiener, 2019\)](#), which would allow developers of certain types of housing projects to override locally developed and adopted height limitations, housing densities, parking requirements, and limit

design review standards, would have significant negative impacts on cities' ability to plan for growth in a responsible and sustainable manner. Like SB 50, SB 79 undermines years of responsible planning and imposes dense, high-rise projects without evaluating our capacity to support them.

SB 79 will not spur much-needed housing construction in a manner that supports local flexibility, decision-making, and community input. State-driven ministerial or by-right housing approval processes fail to recognize the extensive public engagement associated with developing and adopting zoning ordinances and housing elements. We urge you to reject legislation – like SB 79 – that preempts local control and instead pursue solutions that respect community-driven planning, support targeted housing production, and incentivize collaboration between state and local governments.

For the reasons discussed above, the Gateway Cities listed below are respectfully opposed to SB 79. If you have any questions, please contact Nicholas Cabeza, Regional Public Affairs Manager, at (562) 322-1861 or ncabeza@calcities.org.

Sincerely,

City of Artesia

City of Bell

City of Bellflower

City of Commerce

City of Cudahy

City of Downey

City of Lakewood

City of La Mirada

City of Norwalk

City of Paramount

City of Pico Rivera

City of South Gate

City of Vernon

City of Whittier