

DRAFT

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Senator, California State Senate
1021 O St, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Senator Wiener,

The City of Palm Desert respectfully submits this letter in strong opposition to SB 79, which undermines locally adopted and state-certified housing elements by granting land use authority to transit agencies — entities not charged with local planning — without requiring that housing, affordable or otherwise, be delivered.

Palm Desert is deeply committed to doing its part to address the statewide housing crisis. We have adopted a compliant Housing Element and are actively facilitating housing production through thoughtful, community-based planning. However, SB 79 disregards these efforts by imposing a blanket upzoning mandate within a half-mile of transit stops, requiring cities to ministerially approve projects up to seven stories in height and 120 units per acre, regardless of infrastructure capacity, community input, or environmental concerns.

SB 79 would have a significant and disruptive impact on Palm Desert:

- **Incompatible Development Patterns:** Palm Desert is a master-planned community that prioritizes sustainable desert-sensitive development. The bill's one-size-fits-all approach is incompatible with the City's unique land use and design considerations, including height limitations, view preservation, and water-wise development.
- **Transit Agency Overreach:** SB 79 grants unlimited authority to transit agencies on lands they own or control, including properties far from meaningful transit corridors. This removes Palm Desert's ability to ensure that development is compatible with the surrounding community and infrastructure capacity, including water supply and traffic circulation.
- **Undermines Public Engagement:** Palm Desert residents have actively participated in shaping our General Plan, Housing Element, and zoning ordinances. SB 79 would sideline these voices in favor of ministerial approvals without meaningful public input or environmental review.

While we appreciate the intent to increase housing production near transit, SB 79 is not the answer. It fails to ensure the construction of affordable or even market-rate housing while simultaneously stripping cities of meaningful oversight. Instead, the Legislature should focus on sustained, robust investment in housing and infrastructure that respects local decision-making.

For these reasons, the City of Palm Desert respectfully opposes SB 79.

Sincerely,