



# CITY OF PALM DESERT

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July 10, 2025

The Honorable Lori Wilson  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Transportation  
1020 N Street, Suite 112  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 445 (Wiener) – Transportation Projects: Permitting – Notice of OPPOSITION  
(As amended 6/30/2025)**

Dear Chair Wilson,

The City of Palm Desert must respectfully oppose SB 445 (Wiener), which proposes to establish a new state-dominated permitting and project delivery scheme that would severely constrain local governments' ability to responsibly manage public rights-of-way and protect community interests.

While we recognize and share the goal of advancing sustainable transportation, SB 445 would impose sweeping changes to existing coordination processes between state agencies, cities, and utilities. Specifically, it mandates rigid timelines, prescriptive procedures, and binding dispute resolution requirements that are ill-suited to the complexity of infrastructure delivery in diverse local contexts.

**SB 445 will significantly impact Palm Desert in several ways:**

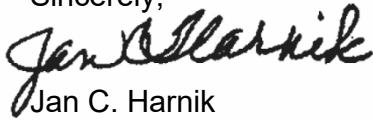
- **Erosion of Local Control Over State Highway Corridors.** Our City contains major state highways such as Highway 111, which are integral to local commerce, tourism, and public safety. Under SB 445, Caltrans and project proponents could override local standards and approvals for any project deemed “sustainable transportation,” including transit priority lanes and bike infrastructure, regardless of community concerns.
- **Capacity Constraints.** The bill requires cities to publish extensive objective standards, manage detailed pre-notice processes, and comply with strict review timelines that exceed the staffing capacity of many mid-sized cities. For Palm Desert, which must already coordinate with Caltrans and utilities on routine encroachment permits, this represents a substantial new administrative burden without commensurate funding or technical support.
- **Risk to Public Infrastructure and Safety.** SB 445 effectively empowers third parties to proceed with complex relocations or modifications to critical infrastructure, such as water, sewer, and electrical facilities, in the public right-of-way without meaningful opportunity for cities to ensure adequate safeguards for service continuity and environmental protection.

- **Unprecedented Preemption.** This measure declares itself a matter of statewide concern, overriding charter city authority and decades of established precedent respecting local land use and permitting discretion. It would set a precedent for state agencies to unilaterally dictate project parameters in our community.

While we appreciate efforts to improve project delivery, these benefits should not come at the expense of thoughtful planning, infrastructure integrity, and local accountability. Rather than solving coordination challenges, SB 445 simply shifts the burden and risk onto cities like Palm Desert while sidelining the very agencies responsible for protecting public infrastructure and community quality of life.

For these reasons, the City of Palm Desert respectfully urges that SB 445 be made a two-year bill to allow for more collaboration with local governments. We stand ready to work with you to develop a more balanced approach that expedites sustainable transportation improvements while respecting local capacity and authority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan C. Harnik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jan C. Harnik  
Mayor, City of Palm Desert