Summary of Vehicle Weight Safety Study Task Force Findings (Assembly Bill 251)

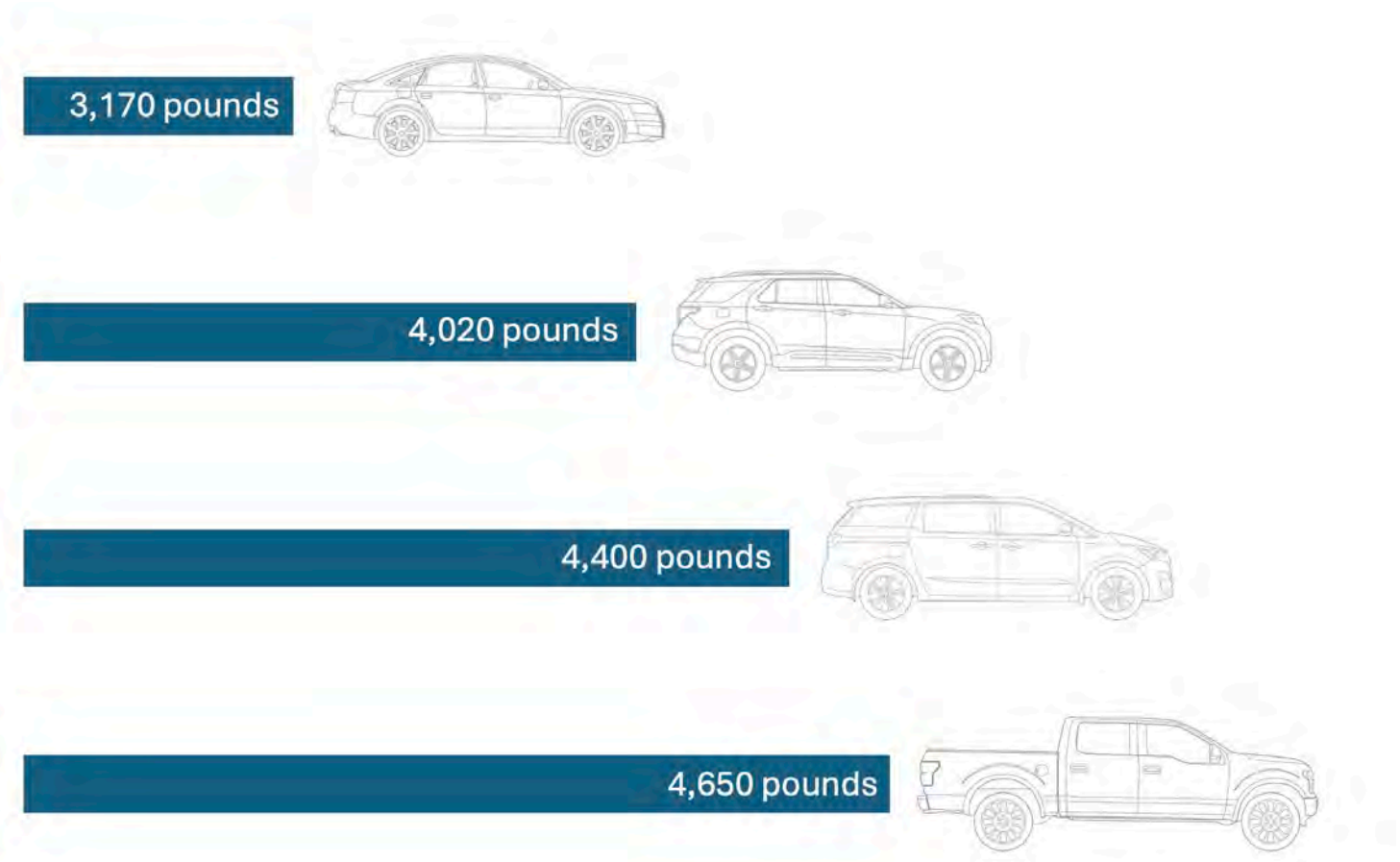
December 4 – 5, 2025

CALIFORNIA
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Presentation Overview

- Legislative Background
- About the Task Force
- Summary of Task Force Findings
- Timeline & Next Steps

Passenger Vehicle Types and Average Weight



Data: California DMV, 2023

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Task Force Membership

Approved by Commission December 2024

	ORGANIZATION	TYPE
1	California Office of Traffic Safety	State Agency
2	California Department of Motor Vehicles	State Agency
3	California Highway Patrol	State Agency
4	California City Transportation Initiative	Local Agency Consortium
5	California State Association of Counties	Local Agency consortium
6	Alliance for Automotive Innovation	Automotive Industry
7	California New Car Dealers Association	Automotive Industry
8	American Automobile Association (AAA)	Automotive Industry
9	Streets for All	Road User Safety Organization
10	American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)	Road User Safety Organization
11	Active San Gabriel Valley	Road User Safety Organization
12	National Federation of the Blind of California	Road User Safety Organization
13	Safe Streets Research	Research Organization
14	California Farm Bureau	Business/Labor Organization
15	United Contractors	Business/Labor Organization

Task Force Meeting Dates & Topics

Dates	Task Force Meeting Topics
June 13, 2025	• Kick-Off meeting
July 16, 2025	• Trends in Vehicle Fleet • Trends in Road User Injuries and Fatalities
Sept 9, 2025	• Introduction to the Safe System Approach • Potential Policy Solutions: Regulatory and Built Environment Responses • Impacts of Vehicle Weight on Road Degradation
Oct 29, 2025	• Potential Policy Solutions: Vehicle Weight Fees • Consumer Behavior Responses
Nov 13, 2025	• Finalize Task Force Findings

Task Force Process

- Each Task Force Meeting included:
  - Presentation of UC Berkeley academic research;
  - Task Force roundtable discussion of research key takeaways; and
  - Public comment
- A summary of each meeting was presented at each subsequent meeting and rolled-up into the summary presented today.
- The Task Force process aimed to summarize the breadth of Task Force perspectives rather than build consensus.

Summary of Task Force Findings

The remaining slides identify key takeaways from the University of California, Berkeley's research and feedback from Task Force members and the public regarding topics below:

1. California Vehicle Fleet Trends
2. California Injury and Fatality Trends
3. Potential Regulatory Responses
4. Potential Built Environment Responses
5. Vehicle Weight and Road Degradation
6. Potential Weight-Based Fee Responses
7. Consumer Behavior Response

1. California Vehicle Fleet Trends Key Takeaways

- Since the 1980s **passenger vehicle weight continues to increase** across all vehicle classes and fuel types.
- **SUVs are expected to overtake sedans** as the most registered vehicle in California in urban, rural, and suburban areas.
- People are holding onto their vehicles longer, which **can delay adoption of newer vehicles with improved safety features** (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems).

2. California Injury & Fatality Trends Key Takeaways

- **Sedans cause the majority of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries in urban and rural areas.** Sedans are the most registered vehicle type in California.

- **SUVs** are the **fastest growing** vehicle type involved in crashes involving vulnerable road users.

- **Vehicle collisions trends since 2010:**

pedestrian fatalities +71% increase	**pedestrian serious injuries +44% increase**
bicyclist serious injuries +20% increase	bicyclist fatalities remain constant

- Task Force members questioned the degree to which **other factors may or may not influence collision trends presented such as road user behaviors, distractions, licensing standards, vehicle age, rideshare services, and autonomous vehicles.**

3. Potential Regulatory Responses Key Takeaways

- Historically, **passenger vehicle safety** focused on vehicle occupants and **not those outside of a vehicle**.
- Countries similar to the U.S. require **vehicle testing for pedestrian collision outcomes**.
- Task Force members discussed other aspects of **the safe system approach** (improving infrastructure, driver licensing standards and education, traffic safety laws, enforcement, other) that might also **reduce fatalities and serious injuries of vulnerable road users**.

4. Potential Built Environment Responses Key Takeaways

- **Risk and severity of crashes** involving vulnerable road users could be reduced by: emphasizing the **safe system approach**, **effective roadway design**, and **investment in infrastructure.**

- **Barriers to infrastructure improvements** for vulnerable road users include: **limited funding**, implementing **projects at scale**, and **jurisdictional challenges**.

- **Inequities resulting from investments in the built environment** may include: **less funding in disadvantaged or rural** areas; **accelerated gentrification and displacement**.

5. Vehicle Weight and Road Degradation Key Takeaways

- **Passenger vehicles, including battery electric and fuel cell engines, have a very minor effect on pavement damage and rehabilitation costs** when compared to large multi-axle commercial vehicles - so much so that they are **excluded from consideration from Caltrans' pavement damage calculations.**
  - Therefore, **incremental increases in passenger vehicle weight are not anticipated to have a significant impact on road degradation.**

6. Potential Weight-Based Fee Responses Key Takeaways

- Weight-based passenger vehicle fee could most easily be structured:
  - as an **annual vehicle registration fee** OR a fee at **point-of-purchase**
  - the **same across all vehicles** OR **different based on various factors,** including fuel type, occupation, disability, income, etc.
- Some Task Force members supported a fee to **fund safety improvements for vulnerable road users** or to **subsidize lighter weight vehicles, bicycles, and transit.**
- Some Task Force members did **not support a fee**, citing the **lack of a strong causal relationship between vehicle weight and negative safety outcomes for vulnerable road users**, **affordability concerns** and political feasibility.

7. Consumer Behavior Response Key Takeaways

- Consumer purchase behavior could change more in response to a **larger one-time fee** than a smaller annual fee:
  - **steeper decline in the heaviest passenger vehicles purchased** across **all fuel types**
  - generate **more revenue**
  - consumers could switch to lighter vehicles or hold on to their current vehicles longer to avoid this fee
- **Exemptions from a fee could substantially lower revenues**
- Task Force members discussed **how a fee may or may not address the goals of the study.**

Timeline & Next Steps

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Questions?