

Vehicle Weight Safety Study

Report to the Legislature

MAY
2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Ensuring the safety of all users of the transportation system is a key priority of the State. In 2020, California demonstrated national leadership by being among the first states to formally adopt the Safe System Approach as the policy framework through which the State will aim to achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. These goals are reinforced in the [2025 Joint Secretary's Policy on Road Safety](#) and through other statewide plans.

Despite this commitment to enhancing safety, serious injuries and fatalities amongst vulnerable road users (i.e., those who walk, bike, and roll) continue to trend upwards over the past decade. In recent years, more attention has been given to safety outcomes resulting from the growing size of passenger vehicles. While manufacturers have deployed technological advancements intended to protect vehicle occupants in a crash, growth in vehicle size and weight over time may increase the risk posed to persons outside of the vehicle in a collision.

[Assembly Bill 251](#) requires the California Transportation Commission (Commission) to convene a task force to study the following topics:



The relationship between vehicle weight and road user injuries and fatalities.



The relationship between vehicle weight and degradation of road infrastructure.



Appropriate responses, including the potential costs and benefits of imposing a passenger vehicle weight fee to factor in passenger vehicle weight to offset unreasonable impacts.

TASK FORCE & ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The Commission convened the [Vehicle Weight Safety Study Task Force](#), composed of 15 organizations including state agencies, local transportation agencies, safety advocates, and representatives from the automobile industry and labor organizations.

To inform the study, the Commission contracted with the UC Berkeley research team to research trends in California road user injuries and fatalities; trends in vehicle weight, size, and height; the landscape of policy solutions; weight fees and consumer behavior; the relationship between passenger vehicle weight and road degradation; and equity considerations. This research was presented to the Task Force at five public meetings taking place from June – November 2025.

LEGISLATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The Commission is required to submit a report to the Legislature detailing the findings of the study and any legislative recommendations. The legislative considerations outlined below are built upon the Task Force findings, academic research by the UC Berkeley Research Team, and feedback from the Interagency Equity Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and the public.



The Commission acknowledges the significant need for increased funding for roadway safety infrastructure investments and complementary education and encouragement efforts. The Commission recommends funding to address safety for vulnerable road users in the broader context of the State's need for a sustainable funding mechanism for transportation infrastructure, as described in the Commission's [2025 State and Local Transportation System Needs Assessment](#).



The Commission does not recommend implementation of a passenger vehicle weight fee. While some other academic studies have found a potential relationship between growing passenger vehicle size and negative safety outcomes for vulnerable road users, the statewide analysis conducted for this study does not show a clear causal relationship between the two due to the difficulty in isolating vehicle weight from other factors in a collision with a vulnerable road user (such as speeding, roadway/weather conditions, distracted driving, etc.), as well as other data limitations. Research also shows that a passenger vehicle fee is unlikely to change consumer purchase behavior unless it were roughly equivalent to doubling existing vehicle sales taxes and fees (\$3,871 on average) and that growing passenger vehicle weight is not expected to have a significant impact on roadway degradation. However, the Commission has identified considerations for a potential fee, should the Legislature choose to implement one, that are detailed in the full report.



The Commission outlines options should the Legislature wish to consider establishing a voluntary motor vehicle nonoccupant safety rating for passenger vehicles. In the absence of federal action, the Legislature should consider establishing a voluntary motor vehicle safety rating program specific to vehicles sold in California that considers safety outcomes for occupants and nonoccupants, including vulnerable road users. Such a program could provide additional information to potential consumers, helping to incentivize the purchase of safer passenger vehicles and supplementing technological advancements made by manufacturers intended to enhance safety.

For more information, visit the CTC's [Vehicle Weight Safety Study webpage](#).

For questions, email ctc@catc.ca.gov.

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