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FACT SHEET

AB XX (Zbur) – Urban, Multimodal Coastal Communities

SUMMARY

AB XX will modernize coastal permitting in urban, multimodal communities (UMCs) – which are defined as cities (or portions of a city) in the coastal zone which have implemented robust transit service, committed bike infrastructure, and climate and safety plans. Once certified as a UMC, cities and counties will be allowed to locally approve a limited set of projects and activities that do not impact coastal resources or public access to the coastal zone.

BACKGROUND

The California Coastal Act of 1976 was a landmark policy achievement in the fight to protect and manage California’s 1,100 miles of precious, vibrant coastline. The historic law balanced resource and ecological protection, coastal access, and economic vitality, and its passage marked a critical inflection point in California’s commitment to defending our priceless coastline.

To protect public access to our coast and beaches, the Coastal Commission has historically focused on and prioritized automobile infrastructure and parking. However, in the decades since the Coastal Act’s passage, certain coastal communities have adopted forward-looking transit-oriented climate and mobility strategies to provide the public with multimodal transportation options within the coastal zone, to reduce reliance on automobiles.

For many jurisdictions that have made significant investments in building out these sustainable transportation options, the Coastal Commission’s focus on parking and road improvements is not necessary to provide public access to the coastal zone.

Instead, by requiring an extensive and time-consuming process for permitting routine activities, the Coastal Commission can inadvertently inhibit local jurisdictions’ ability to progress on key, shared goals. These include further developing multimodal transit by adding bike or bus lanes, constructing housing already allowed under local or state law, making minor building updates or changing the use of an existing building, and adding outdoor dining to existing, fully permitted restaurants.

Additionally, some of these same urban, coastal cities that have worked to expand public access and protect coastal ecosystems are confronting a range of economic challenges, including changing consumer practices, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the devastating 2025 fires. These challenges have resulted in prolonged commercial vacancies, fiscal strain on public infrastructure systems, and the need for timely tenant improvements and temporary activations to revitalize coastal business districts. These acute needs are juxtaposed with the Coastal Commission’s current approval process, which often takes years to advance important projects that have no adverse coastal impacts.

In areas that are urbanized, intensively developed, and void of sensitive ecological

resources and habitats, Coastal Commission oversight merely adds cost and significant delay—and diverts Commission staff resources from their crucial role of protecting our beaches and sensitive habitats.

SOLUTION

AB XX modernizes coastal zone governance by recognizing and empowering certain urbanized, transit-oriented communities to administer limited specified activities without the need for individual coastal development permits. This bill only applies to a small fraction of the coastal zone and will preserve the California Coastal Commission’s authority and ability to protect coastal resources from activities that threaten sensitive coastal resources and habitats or might reduce public coastal access in areas that do not have transit and other multimodal transportation options.

First, this bill creates a narrow and rigorous set of criteria for a city to be certified as an Urban Multimodal Community (UMC). To qualify, a city must have:

- High quality transit in the coastal zone;
- Bike infrastructure in the coastal zone; and
- Adopted targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fatal and severe injury crashes.

If these criteria are met for all or a portion of a jurisdiction, the *city may choose* to be certified as an Urban Multimodal Community.

As a UMC, regulatory authority over a select set of actions would return to the city and be exempted from Coastal Commission oversight. These include:

- Managing and regulating parking requirements;
- Adding bus or bike infrastructure;
- Updating existing buildings or changing the use of those buildings;
- Constructing housing that would otherwise be permitted under local or state law;

- Permitting and managing temporary events (such as those related to FIFA or LA28); and
- Approving and regulating outdoor dining.

Taken together, this bill supports local jurisdictions that are actively and successfully pursuing the original goals of the Coastal Act—namely, ensuring coastal access and environmental protection. By returning control over a limited but important set of activities to these cities, this bill will alleviate an unnecessary regulatory burden, improve local flexibility, and reduce costs and uncertainty for city government, individuals, and businesses.

Finally, reducing the Coastal Commission’s workload in a small but significant way will allow the Commission to concentrate its resources on its meaningful regulatory work—protecting California’s sensitive coastal habitats and species, and contending with communities and protecting public access to our beaches and natural spaces by means other than requiring parking in areas with sustainable transit and transportation alternatives.

SUPPORT

- City of Santa Monica (Co-sponsor)
- Streets for All (Co-sponsor)
- Abundant Housing LA (Co-sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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