



June 4, 2024

The Honorable Laura Friedman
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 5150
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 1889 (Friedman) Conservation element: wildlife and habitat connectivity – Neutral as Amended

Dear Assemblymember Friedman:

The American Planning Association, California Chapter (APA California) will move to a neutral position on AB 1889, as amended on June 4, 2024. AB 1889 would require the conservation element to consider the effects of development within a jurisdiction on the movement of wildlife and habitat connectivity upon the next update of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028.

APA California is a non-profit organization made up of practicing planners, citizens and public officials committed to advancing the practice of local, regional, and statewide planning throughout urban, suburban, and rural California. As adopted in APA California's Legislative Platform, *Plan California*, our organization discourages new mandatory general plan elements, instead allowing cities and counties the flexibility to determine how to include new mandatory subject matter. As introduced, AB 1889 would have required a new standalone wildlife connectivity element effective January 1, 2025, which raised significant concerns for our organization.

To reach the goals of AB 1889 without mandating a new standalone element, amendments to the bill have reduced the level of specificity and consultation that planners would need to undertake and focused efforts specifically in the conservation element where this type of planning work belongs. Additionally, consistent with our request on all legislative proposals to update the general plan that are moving this year, recent amendments make the bill effective upon the next revision of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028. APA California believes a clear, predictable, and coordinated window for general plan updates will result in more efficient and coordinated planning efforts and is consistent with other legislative proposals moving this session.

We appreciate the time your staff and sponsors have spent with APA California to discuss concerns and allow our organization to suggest amendments to the bill that would directly impact planners at the local level, without any funding to implement. While we are certainly appreciative of all the recent amendments to the bill, we would flag a broader issue for the Legislature to consider. Over the last few years there have been several new mandates to update various elements of the general plan. Planners are attempting to keep pace with the level and scale of new planning-related laws that are passed year over year, however many jurisdictions simply lack resources, both in terms of funding and staff capacity, to keep up with the cumulative burden imposed by these new mandates. In a tough fiscal year for both the state and local governments, 5 bills that would impose new updates to various general plan elements are being considered, including AB 1889. This is on top of other planning-related proposals. While language is included that they're not reimbursable state mandates because local governments can cover associated costs by increasing local fees, general plan updates whether large or small are extremely costly to undertake. Even if a jurisdiction raises fees associated with a particular update, it will take several years to ever cover these costs. And at the same time, the Legislature continues to raise concerns about local fees and their impacts on developments generally. While we understand the desire to focus on issues in communities throughout the state, we ask that the Legislature consider the cumulative impacts and continue to look at tangible ways, absent funding, to support local governments in implementation. This is why the adjusted trigger date and other recent amendments to AB 1889 are so critical, should this bill become law.

If you have any questions, please contact Lauren De Valencia, Stefan/George Associates, APA California's lobbyist, at 916 443-5301, lauren@stefangeorge.com.

Sincerely,

Erik de Kok, AICP
Vice President Policy and Legislation
APA California

cc: Senate Local Government Committee
Senate Republican Caucus
The Governor
The Office of Planning and Research