

# City of Palo Alto

*Office of the Mayor and City Council*

April 30, 2021

The Honorable Ben Hueso  
Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee  
State Capitol Building, Room 4035  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 556 (Dodd) Street Light Poles, Traffic Signal Poles, Utility Poles, and Support Structures: Attachments (As Amended 03/16/21) Opposed from the City of Palo Alto**

Dear Senator Hueso,

The City of Palo Alto must respectfully oppose Senate Bill (SB) 556 (Dodd), related to wireless broadband infrastructure deployment.


In 2019, the City of Palo Alto [supported United States House Resolution 530](#) which empowered local communities in relation to accelerated wireless broadband development. SB 556 directly conflicts with the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) adopted regulations on wireless services deployment, which cities and counties across the nation are actively implementing. This measure requires local governments to make space available to telecommunications providers without recognizing local authority to manage the public right-of-way preserved in federal law. FCC regulations explicitly enable local governments to ensure that such installations meet appearance and design standards, maintain traffic safety, protect historical resources' integrity, and safeguard citizens' quality of life. Safety on local streets is solely the responsibility of local governments.

The bill (SB 556) creates ambiguity in the fee structure for local governments to charge for access to infrastructure. Additionally, SB 556 seems to conflict with Palo Alto's current Master License Agreements with carriers regarding traffic signal poles. While attachments are permitted on wood utility poles and street light poles, traffic signal poles are determined to be critical infrastructure and are currently excluded from attachments for public safety reasons. If the goal of SB 556 is to implement the existing FCC orders into state law, there should be no added ambiguity created by changes from what was already decided at the federal level.

We encourage the state legislature to look for more opportunities to support local governments in California in our efforts to expand broadband internet access to further the state and federal broadband goals. If there is one thing that became clearer during the pandemic it is that there is a need for more reliable, low cost, internet access. Palo Alto is working on a fiber to the home project to enhance internet connectivity locally. As the state works to close the digital divide, legislative efforts to encourage and incentivize telecommunications companies to better service historically underserved areas with access to reliable and affordable internet would be time well spent. Unfortunately, SB 556 does not accomplish that goal.

While Palo Alto stands ready to work with the Legislature to further the state's broadband goals, these efforts should not inherently conflict with the appropriate local authority to manage the right-of-way and comply with existing FCC decisions. For these reasons, the City of Palo Alto opposes SB 556 (Dodd).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Tom DuBois, Mayor  
City of Palo Alto

cc: The Honorable Bill Dodd  
Josh Becker, Senator, California's 13th Senate District  
Marc Berman, Assemblymember, California's 24th Assembly District  
Seth Miller, Regional Public Affairs Manager, Peninsula Division, League of California Cities  
Emily Beach, Division President, League of California Cities  
Cities Association of Santa Clara County  
Palo Alto City Council