

*Rio Dell City Hall  
675 Wildwood Avenue  
Rio Dell, CA 95562  
(707) 764-3532  
cityofriodell.ca.gov*



April 1, 2025

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Authorize the Mayor to Execute of Letter of Opposition to SB 79 (Wiener)  
Transit-Oriented Development

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Authorize the Mayor to sign the attached letter; or,

Amend and/or take no action.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

From the League of California Cities:

**Action requested:** **OPPOSE** SB 79 (Wiener) Transit-oriented Development. SB 79 has not yet been set for hearing but will be heard in the Senate Housing Committee and Senate Local Government Committee in the next few weeks. Opposition letters should be sent ASAP to both committees in order to get reflected in the committee analyses.

**What the bill does:** Requires cities to ministerially approve higher-density residential projects — up to 7 stories — near public transit stops, regardless of zoning codes. SB 79 limits the use of local development standards and allows transit agencies full land-use authority over residential and commercial development on property they own or lease, without any requirement that developers build housing, let alone affordable housing.

**Why this is important to Cal Cities members:** SB 79 overrides the state's own mandated local housing elements by forcing cities to approve transit-oriented development projects near specified transit stops — up to seven stories high and a density of 120 homes per acre — without regard to the community's needs, environmental review, or public input. SB 79 provides transit agencies:

- Unlimited land use authority on property they own or have a permanent easement, regardless of the distance from a transit stop.

- Power to determine all aspects of residential and commercial development including height, density, and design, without any regard to local zoning or planning.
- Ability to develop 100% commercial projects, even at transit stops, and not provide a single new home.

Attachments: Proposed Letter  
Related letter from CalCities

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April 1, 2025

The Honorable Scott Wiener  
Senator, California State Senate  
1021 O St, Suite 8620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 79 (Wiener) Transit-oriented Development  
Notice of Opposition**

Dear Senator Wiener,

The City of Rio Dell writes to express our strong opposition to your SB 79 (Wiener), which would disregard state-certified housing elements and bestow land use authority to transit agencies without any requirement that developers build housing, let alone affordable housing.

SB 79 doubles down on the recent trend of the state overriding its own mandated local housing elements. This latest overreaching effort forces cities to approve transit-oriented development projects near specified transit stops — up to seven stories high and a density of 120 homes per acre — without regard to the community's needs, environmental review, or public input.

Most alarmingly, SB 79 defies cities' general plans and provides transit agencies unlimited land use authority on property they own or have a permanent easement, regardless of the distance from a transit stop. Transit agencies would have the power to determine all aspects of the development including height, density, and design, without any regard to local zoning or planning.

This broad new authority applies to both residential and commercial development. Transit agencies could develop 100% commercial projects — even at transit stops — and not provide a single new home, while simultaneously making the argument that more housing must be constructed around transit stops.

The City of Rio Dell appreciates and respects your desire to pursue a housing production proposal. However, as currently drafted, SB 79 will not spur much-needed housing construction in a manner that supports local flexibility, decision-making, and community input. State-driven ministerial or by-right housing approval processes fail to recognize the extensive public engagement associated with developing and adopting zoning ordinances and housing elements.

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California will never produce the number of homes needed with an increasingly state-driven, by-right housing approval process. What we really need is a sustainable state investment that matches the scale of this decades-in-the-making crisis. For these reasons, the City of Rio Dell strongly opposes SB 79.

Sincerely,

Debra Garnes  
Mayor  
City of Rio Dell

cc. Senator Mike McGuire  
Assembly Member Chris Rogers  
Sara Sanders, Regional Public Affairs Manager, [sanders@calcities.org](mailto:sanders@calcities.org)  
League of California Cities, [cityletters@calcities.org](mailto:cityletters@calcities.org)





March 26, 2025

The Honorable Scott Wiener  
Senator, California State Senate  
1021 O St, Suite 8620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 79 (Wiener) Transit-oriented Development  
Notice of Opposition**

Dear Senator Scott Wiener,

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Cal Cities appreciates and respects your desire to pursue a housing production proposal. However, as currently drafted, SB 79 will not spur much-needed housing construction in a manner that supports local flexibility, decision-making, and community input. State-driven ministerial or by-right housing approval processes fail to recognize the extensive public engagement associated with developing and adopting zoning ordinances and housing elements.

California will never produce the number of homes needed with an increasingly state-driven, by-right housing approval process. What we really need is a sustainable state investment that matches the scale of this decades-in-the-making crisis. For these reasons, Cal Cities opposes SB 79. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this in greater detail at (916) 658-8264.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Rhine".

Jason Rhine, Senior Director, Legislative Affairs