

For Immediate Release – [Office of State Senator Jerry Hill](#) – Thursday, April 20, 2017
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Senate Unanimously Approves Bill By Senator Hill Requiring Bus Passengers And Drivers To Wear Seatbelts In Vehicles Equipped With Them

Under SB 20, California Would Become The First State To Make The National Transportation Safety Board Recommendation On Seatbelt Safety Law

SACRAMENTO – The California State Senate today unanimously approved Senator Jerry Hill’s bill requiring that passengers buckle up when riding in buses that are equipped with safety belts. Senate Bill 20 would also apply to bus drivers.

In 2015, the National Transportation Safety Board issued a safety recommendation that all states enact legislation to enforce mandatory seatbelt laws for all vehicles that have seatbelts, including buses. To date, no states have done so.

“This is a common sense bill: If a bus has seatbelts, the people in the bus need to wear them. Doing so will help save lives and prevent injuries,” said Senator Hill, D-San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

Just last month, during an NTSB hearing on a fatal 2016 bus crash in San Jose that left two passengers dead, the safety board reiterated its recommendation, and called on California to enact a seatbelt law covering buses. Although the bus that crashed was equipped with seatbelts, the two passengers who died were not wearing them and they were ejected from the vehicle when it collided with a highway barrier. According to the NTSB, if the passengers had been wearing seatbelts, they would not have been thrown from the bus, and might not have been injured.

Under SB 20, California would become the first-state in the country to enact a mandatory seatbelt law for bus passengers and drivers. Not wearing a seatbelt would be punishable by a fine. Bus companies will be required to maintain seatbelts in good working order.

The legislation does not apply to school buses, which are covered by other laws. The bill also does not require buses to be retrofitted with seatbelts.

Recent federal regulations, however, require new buses to have the safety devices. Last November, a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rule took effect, requiring all new buses of a certain type to be manufactured with seatbelts. Yet, nothing in the NHTSA rule or law compels passengers and drivers to wear the seatbelts.

NHTSA determined that if seatbelts were worn in buses, they could reduce fatalities by 44 percent and severe injuries by 45 percent. In rollover crashes, seatbelts could reduce fatalities by 77 percent.

With the vote by the Senate, SB 20 heads to the state Assembly for further action.

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