

The Infill Builders' parking bill that I [blogged](#) about this morning just passed unanimously out of the Assembly Local Government committee this afternoon, overcoming perhaps its biggest hurdle to ultimate passage.

Although one would expect local governments to oppose a state bill that limits their ability to demand excessive parking for transit-oriented development, opposition to AB 710 has come from a much more unlikely source: affordable housing advocates. Testifying today as "tweeners" (i.e. not quite in support but not yet opposed) were the [Western Center on Law and Poverty](#) and the [California Rural Legal Assistance](#).

Their concern is that they don't want current low-income residents located in transit-adjacent neighborhoods to be displaced by new infill development (basically a concern about gentrification). They would like the bill to contain some protections to guarantee that any "lost" affordable units are replaced with new ones. The problem with attaching conditions like an anti-gentrification measure to the parking reduction, however, is that developers would be basically swapping one set of conditions (excessive parking) for another (additional affordable housing) — ultimately thwarting the whole point of the bill. Hopefully these otherwise valid concerns can be addressed through separate legislation or by improving existing legislation on affordable housing.

The other concern, from California Rural Legal Assistance, is that reduced parking requirements may take away a bargaining chip that affordable housing advocates use to extract more affordable housing from market-rate developers. Under [current law](#) (SB 1818), developers who add more low-income or senior housing to their projects may be eligible either to build more units than applicable land use laws allow and/or receive a reduction in their parking requirements. Affordable housing groups like CRLA are worried that an automatic reduction in parking requirements under AB 710 will eliminate the parking reduction incentive in the density bonus program.

Essentially, these advocates are saying that they know that high parking requirements for transit-oriented infill are bad policy, but they need that bad policy as a bargaining chip to get more affordable housing. Worse, statistics I've seen from the City of Los Angeles suggest that parking reductions have been rarely used as leverage for density bonuses. From both an environmental and economic perspective, this line of argument is not constructive for California, given the state's urgent need to facilitate the construction of more infill development. As with their first concern, I hope that stakeholders can focus on a more comprehensive framework to address affordable housing needs instead of doing so through a parking bill. Fortunately, bill author Nancy Skinner has a long and positive history of working with affordable housing advocates, so they are optimistic they can work

with her.

Meanwhile, AB 710 survives for a vote in the appropriations committee, and then on to the floor of the Assembly.