Do we really need high parking requirements here?

When last we checked on AB 710, the California bill to eliminate minimum parking requirements for infill and transit-oriented projects, it sailed through Assembly committees and eventually passed that body unanimously, 78-0. And why not? The bill offers both environmental and economic benefits: by removing inefficient minimum parking requirements on transit-adjacent developments, more projects could get built in infill areas to increase transit ridership and accommodate a growing population without forcing them to drive everywhere; urban affordable housing projects would become cheaper to build and potentially more ubiquitous and expansive; and downtowns across the state could see an uptick in infill projects, revitalizing communities and boosting jobs in a beleaguered construction industry.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the State Senate. During the recess, the California League of Cities caught wind of the bill and made its destruction a top priority. The League of Cities and their member cities swamped state legislators with phone calls, arguing that the bill represents "a one-size-fits-all approach being handed down from the state" that "does not address the unique circumstances of each community." The irony in the argument is that the bill seeks to counter one-size-fits-all *local* parking requirements that do not take into account a project's proximity to transit. The bill also includes exceptions, including for cities that document a reason for needing additional requirements. And project developers could still provide more parking on their own if the market demanded it. This bill simply prevented a local government from mandating more parking where it would not be needed.

Given the League's power and persuasion in the Capitol, it succeeded. Yesterday, the Senate voted 19-17 to oppose the bill (21 votes were required for passage). The Senate floor jockey, Lois Wolk, was granted a motion for reconsideration (essentially a "do-over" on a failed vote). So the bill and its sponsors will have one more chance to overcome the opposition and are likely mounting a furious campaign to get the additional votes. But barring a breakthrough, the prospects for meaningful parking reform in the state just got very dim.