

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

P. O. Box 942898
Sacramento, CA 94298-001
(916) 843-3001
(800) 735-2929 (TT/TDD)
(800) 735-2922 (Voice)



May 19, 2015

File No.: 001.09486.016016.012.AB8

The Honorable Mike Gatto
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3152
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Gatto:

I am writing to inform you that the California Highway Patrol unfortunately must oppose Assembly Bill (AB) 8. The alerts proposed in your legislation would significantly increase the total number of alerts displayed on highway Changeable Message Signs (CMS). We believe this will decrease the effectiveness of California's AMBER Alert system. The success of AMBER Alerts is partially a result of their scarcity. AMBER Alerts rely on CMS to involve the motoring public, to the greatest extent possible and as quickly as possible, in the search for a suspect, child, and/or suspect vehicle. These alerts are rare and reserved for the most serious child abduction cases. An increase in the total number of alerts displayed on CMS will likely desensitize the public and law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, with the implementation of AB 60 (Alejo, Chapter 524, Statutes of 2013), it is anticipated that hit-and-run collisions will significantly decrease because many previously unlicensed drivers are now able to obtain a valid driver license after demonstrating proficiency behind the wheel and a basic knowledge of California traffic laws. It seems prudent to consider the effects of AB 60 before a hit-and-run alert system is implemented.

Finally, although the Department coordinates the activation of AMBER Alerts, Blue Alerts, and Silver Alerts, there is nothing in statute that determines which alert takes priority if multiple alerts are activated at the same time. With the addition of hit-and-run alerts proposed in AB 8, and the high frequency with which they could be requested, the prioritization of alerts will likely become problematic.

I appreciate your efforts to reduce hit-and-run collisions and improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to apprehend violators. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me or Captain Rich Desmond in our Office of Special Representative at (916) 843-3200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. A. Farrow".

J. A. FARROW
Commissioner

