



CVR-SAFE Board of Directors

Meeting Date: February 20, 2025

[[!Agenda Item No. {{item.number}}!]]

Potential Call Box Removals and CVR-SAFE Fiscal Stability

Information

Author: Barbara VaughanBechtold

Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: CVR-SAFE

Issue:

With recent cost increases in Capitol Valley Reginal Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (CVR-SAFE) call box maintenance, the CVR-SAFE board should consider the potential for call box removals starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 to address the fiscal sustainability of the CVR-SAFE program.

Request:

Review & Discuss at Meeting

Recommendation for Board:

None; this item is for information and discussion only.

Recommendation for Committee:

None; this item is for information and discussion only.

Background:

CVR-SAFE is comprised of El Dorado, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties. The revenues for the CVR-SAFE are collected through a \$1 fee assessed at the time of vehicle registration in the participating counties.

In late summer 2024, the CVR-SAFE call box maintenance provider, Knightscope, contacted staff to discuss the need for increased costs to cover all call box maintenance services due to increases in costs related for labor, fuel, and insurance. The most recent call box maintenance contract was approved in 2020, and costs have increased substantially since that time. CVR-SAFE staff negotiated with Knightscope regarding this increase in costs and agreed to changes in our contract to control the proposed cost increases for the CVR-SAFE call box system. Knightscope is the sole provider of call box maintenance services in California and is used by all SAFEs throughout the state, and their services are necessary to maintain the operations of the CVR-SAFE call box system. In December 2024, the CVR-SAFE board approved an increase in the allowable cost for call box maintenance in FY 2024-2025 to \$350,868.

Discussion/Analysis:

Based on previous direction from the CVR-SAFE Board staff are returning with potential scenarios regarding

removal of call boxes, both roadside and trailside, to reduce or eliminate ongoing call box maintenance costs, as well as for the placement of additional 511 Roadside Assist signage that would inform travelers that they can call 511 toll free to receive roadside assistance services.

Staff have provided four potential scenarios related to call box services for consideration (Attachment A):

1. Status Quo – This scenario would maintain the current call box system with no additional call box removals.
2. Measured – This scenario would remove all remaining urban and trailside call boxes leaving approximately 165 call boxes in the system. This would bring call box maintenance costs down to what they were before the recent increase and removals would continue until all roadside call boxes were removed and additional 511 Roadside Assist signs were placed over approximately eight years.
3. Rural Only – This scenario would remove all remaining urban and trailside call boxes, and a portion of rural call boxes in less isolated areas, bringing the total number of call boxes down to approximately 65 in only the most rural areas. This would bring call box maintenance costs down to slightly less than half the cost prior to the maintenance cost increase. The scenario would also include the placement of additional 511 Roadside Assist signage.
4. Accelerated – This scenario would remove all remaining call boxes, except for the six crisis call boxes on the Foresthill Bridge in the Placer County for which Placer County pays to operate and maintain. Additional 511 Roadside Assistance signage would need to be placed to mitigate the total removal of the roadside call boxes. The 511 system would continue to allow travelers to call toll free to obtain roadside assistance.

Call Box System Scenarios

Scenario	Number of Call Boxes Remaining (FY 2034-2035)	Annual Maintenance Cost (FY 2034-2035) (including 511 signs)	CVR-SAFE Estimated Financial Position (FY 2034-2035)
1. Status Quo	290	\$471,537	-\$2,197,043
2. Measured	165	\$63,339	\$280,595
3. Rural Only	65	\$101,342	\$785,184
4. Accelerated	6	\$63,339	\$1,300,121

The presented scenarios are based on previous costs for similar call box removals and related services that have been escalated by adding inflationary factors from recent years. CVR-SAFE staff are also working to reduce costs elsewhere starting in FY 2025-2026 including moving to a more streamlined 511 phone system that focuses on continuing to provide a roadside assistance connection and basic traveler information.

CVR-SAFE staff would like to get input from the CVR-SAFE Committee and board members regarding these scenarios to bring forward the appropriate call box system changes needed to keep the CVR-SAFE program fiscally sustainable in the coming years. With the \$1 SAFE vehicle registration fee remaining unchanged and the estimated number of vehicles in the CVR-SAFE region growing by only 50,000 per year, maintaining fiscal sustainability of the CVR-SAFE program and the associated services funded by it will be a challenge. Making changes to the call box system would allow CVR-SAFE to address increasing costs in a program that the agency can control versus other core CVR-SAFE program costs that are harder to manage such as the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program. To view a map of the CVR-SAFE call box system and 511 Roadside Assist signage go to:

[CVR-SAFE Call Box and 511 Roadside Assist Signage Map](#) , including average number of calls per month and cellular coverage availability.

After receiving input from the CVR-SAFE Committee and board members staff will return with the draft FY 2025-2026 CVR-SAFE budget incorporating that input.

Committee Discussion:

At the CVR-SAFE Committee the discussion was focused on support for the item and positive feedback for staff on the Accelerated Scenario that would remove most call boxes in the region. In addition, the item received public comment from Sacramento Transportation Authority and other members of the public, about call boxes no longer being a good use of CVR-SAFE program funds with the proliferation of cell phones across all demographic groups (as of June 2024 98 percent of the U.S adult population had a cell phone according to the Pew Research Center). There was a public comment related to lack of cell phone coverage, though staff did show that cellular phone coverage is available along all highways and freeways in the CVR-SAFE region where roadside call boxes and 511 Roadside Assist signage are placed. Also, there were concerns about replacing roadside call boxes with 511 Roadside Assist signage, and staff were able to provide information on streamlining planned for the regional 511 system with a focus on maintaining toll free roadside assistance access for travelers and general traveler information.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

There is no fiscal impact from this staff report.