



Meeting Date: September 29, 2021

Agenda Item: D.5

AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

SUBJECT:

Discussion and Possible Adoption of Resolution No 2021-__ Authorizing Remote Teleconference Meetings of the Board of Directors of Mendocino Transit Authority for the period of September 30, 2021, through October 30, 2021, Pursuant to Brown Act Provisions.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this item is to decide if Mendocino Transit Authority Board of Directors will continue virtual meetings or return to pre pandemic in-person meetings. MTA Legal counsel has reviewed the attached resolution.

In March 2020, Governor Newsom signed a series of Executive Orders (N-25-20, N-29-20, N-35-20) which modified certain requirements created by the Ralph M. Brown Act ("the Brown Act"), the state's local agency public meetings law. These Executive Orders allowed the MTA Board of Directors to conduct meetings virtually and waived the following requirements:

- That local agencies provide notice of each teleconference location from which a member of the legislative body will be participating in a public meeting.
- That each teleconference location be accessible to the public.
- That members of the public be able to address the legislative body at each teleconference conference location.
- That local agencies post agendas at all teleconference locations.
- That at least a quorum of the members of the local body participate from locations within the boundaries of the territory over which the local body exercises jurisdiction.

The Executive Orders expire on September 30, 2021. This means that the MTA Board would begin in-person meetings after September 30, 2021.

On September 16, 2021, Governor Newsom signed into law AB 361 which provides local agencies with the ability to continue to meet remotely under modified Brown Act requirements if a gubernatorial state of emergency is in effect and state or local officials have imposed or made recommendations for social distancing measures or the local legislative body to determine, by majority vote, that meeting in person would pose an "imminent risk to the health and safety of attendees." It is not sufficient that county and/or city officials have issued a local emergency declaration. The emergency declaration must be one that is made pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act (CA GOVT § 8625).

AB 361 sets out the following meeting requirements if MTA chooses to continue to meet virtually while there is a declared State of Emergency in the state of California:

- Agendas not required to be posted at all teleconference locations.
- Meeting must still be conducted in a manner that protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or the public appearing before the legislative body of a local agency.
- Agendas are not required to identify each teleconference location in the meeting notice/agenda.

- Local agencies are not required to make each teleconference location accessible to the public.
- No requirement to have a quorum of board members participate from within the territorial bounds of the local agency's jurisdiction.
- In each instance in which notice of the time of the teleconferenced meeting is given or the agenda for the meeting is posted, the legislative body shall also give notice of the manner by which members of the public may access the meeting and offer public comment.
- The agenda shall identify and include an opportunity for all persons to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option.
- The legislative body shall allow members of the public to access the meeting, and the agenda shall include an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly
- In the event of a disruption which prevents the local agency from broadcasting the meeting to members of the public using the call-in option or internet-based service option, or in the event of a disruption within the local agency's control which prevents members of the public from offering public comments using the call-in option or internet-based service option, the legislative body shall take no further action on items appearing on the meeting agenda until public access to the meeting via the call-in option or internet-based service option is restored.
- Written/remote public comment must be accepted until the point at which the public comment period is formally closed; registration/sign-up to provide/be recognized to provide public comment can only be closed when the public comment period is formally closed.

MTA currently adheres to many of these requirements with its current on-line and telephonic meeting access. One of the major changes to MTA would be the timed public comment period. The public comment period listed on each of MTA's agendas will be timed and public attendees will have until the public comment period has expired to submit written or verbal public comment.

If MTA adopts a resolution by majority vote that meeting in-person during the state of emergency would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees, adoption of the resolution would permit meeting under the provisions of AB 361 for a maximum period of 30 days. After 30 days, the local agency would need to renew its resolution, consistent with the requirements of AB 361, if the agency desires to continue meeting under the modified Brown Act requirements or allow the resolution to lapse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt the attached resolution allowing MTA to continue virtual meetings for the period of September 30, 2021, through October 30, 2021; or
2. Do not adopt the attached resolution and direct staff to prepare for in-person meetings beginning October 2021.

ATTACHMENTS: Resolution 2021-__ Authorizing Remote Teleconference Meetings
California Special Districts Association Implementation Guide

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-__

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY PROCLAIMING A LOCAL EMERGENCY, RATIFYING THE PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY BY GOVERNOR NEWSOM ON MARCH 4, 2021, AND AUTHORIZING REMOTE TELECONFERENCE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER 1, 2021 THROUGH OCTOBER 30, 2021 PURSUANT TO BROWN ACT PROVISIONS.

WHEREAS, the Mendocino Transit Authority is committed to preserving and nurturing public access and participation in meetings of the Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, all meetings of Mendocino Transit Authority's Board of Directors are open and public, as required by the Ralph M. Brown Act (Cal. Gov. Code 54950 – 54963), so that any member of the public may attend, participate, and watch the Agency's Board conduct their business; and

WHEREAS, the Brown Act, Government Code section 54953(e), makes provisions for remote teleconferencing participation in meetings by members of a legislative body, without compliance with the requirements of Government Code section 54953(b)(3), subject to the existence of certain conditions; and

WHEREAS, a required condition is that a state of emergency is declared by the Governor pursuant to Government Code section 8625, proclaiming the existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the state caused by conditions as described in Government Code section 8558; and

WHEREAS, a proclamation is made when there is an actual incident, threat of disaster, or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the jurisdictions that are within the Agency's boundaries, caused by natural, technological, or human-caused disasters; and

WHEREAS, it is further required that state or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing, or, the Board of Directors meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health and safety of attendees; and

WHEREAS, such conditions now exist, specifically, a State of Emergency has been proclaimed by Governor Newsom on March 4, 2020 and Governor Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 361 on September 16, 2021; and

WHEREAS, on June 15, 2021 Mendocino County Department of Public Health issued an Order directing all individuals in the county to continue to follow state requirements directed by the governor and state public health officer;

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors does hereby find that the SARS-CoV-2 Virus continues to impact our community, and, in-person meetings may create an environment where transmission of SARS-CoV-2 could be spread and has caused, and will continue to cause, conditions of peril to the safety of persons within the Agency that are likely to be beyond the control of services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the Agency, and desires to proclaim a local emergency and ratify the proclamation of state of emergency by the Governor of the State of California; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of the local emergency, the Board of Directors does hereby find that the Board of Directors of Mendocino Transit Authority shall conduct their meetings without compliance with paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) of Government Code section 54953, as authorized by subdivision (e) of

section 54953, and that such legislative bodies shall comply with the requirements to provide the public with access to the meetings as prescribed in paragraph (2) of subdivision (e) of section 54953; and

WHEREAS, Mendocino Transit Authority Board of Directors will continue to post an Agenda online, in accordance with Brown Act requirements, make the meetings available online and allow for public participation in the meetings of the Board of Directors.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MENDOCINO TRANSIT AUTHORITY DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitals. The Recitals set forth above are true and correct and are incorporated into this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2. Proclamation of Local Emergency. The Board hereby proclaims that a local emergency now exists throughout the Agency, and in-person meetings may create an environment where transmission of SARS-CoV-2 could be increased and has caused, and will continue to cause, conditions placing the health and safety of persons within the Agency at risk.

Section 3. Ratification of Governor's Proclamation of a State of Emergency. The Board hereby adopts the Governor of the State of California's Proclamation of State of Emergency, effective as of its issuance date of March 4, 2020.

Section 4. Remote Teleconference Meetings. The Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to take all actions necessary to carry out the intent and purpose of this Resolution including, conducting open and public meetings in accordance with Government Code section 54953(e) and other applicable provisions of the Brown Act.

Section 5. Effective Date of Resolution. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption and shall be effective until the earlier of October 30, 2021, or such time the Board of Directors adopts a subsequent resolution in accordance with Government Code section 54953(e)(3) to extend the time during which the legislative bodies of Mendocino Transit Authority may continue to teleconference without compliance with paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) of section 54953.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of Mendocino Transit Authority this 29th day of September, 2021, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

Chair, Mendocino Transit Authority Board of Directors

Executive Director, Mendocino Transit Authority



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AB 361 – Brown Act: Remote Meetings During a State of Emergency

Background – the Governor’s Executive Orders:

Starting in March 2020, amid rising concern surrounding the spread of COVID-19 throughout communities in the state, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued a series of Executive Orders aimed at containing the novel coronavirus. These Executive Orders ([N-25-20](#), [N-29-20](#), [N-35-20](#)) collectively modified certain requirements created by the Ralph M. Brown Act (“the Brown Act”), the state’s local agency public meetings law.

The orders waived several requirements, including requirements in the Brown Act expressly or impliedly requiring the physical presence of members of the legislative body, the clerk or other personnel of the body, or of the public as a condition of participation in or for the purpose of establishing a quorum for a public meeting.¹² Furthermore, the orders:

- waived the requirement that local agencies provide notice of each teleconference location from which a member of the legislative body will be participating in a public meeting,
- waived the requirement that each teleconference location be accessible to the public,
- waived the requirement that members of the public be able to address the legislative body at each teleconference conference location,
- waived the requirement that local agencies post agendas at all teleconference locations, and,
- waived the requirement that at least a quorum of the members of the local body participate from locations within the boundaries of the territory over which the local body exercises jurisdiction.

Under the orders, local agencies were still required to provide advance notice of each public meeting according to the timeframe otherwise prescribed by the Brown Act, and using the means otherwise prescribed by the Brown Act. Agencies were – for a time – required to allow members of the public to observe and address the meeting telephonically or otherwise electronically. Local agencies were eventually explicitly freed from the obligation of providing a physical location from which members of the public could observe the meeting and offer public comment.³

In each instance in which notice of the time of the meeting was given or the agenda for the meeting was posted, the local agency was required to give notice of the manner members of the public could observe the meeting and offer public comment. In any instance in which there was a change in the manner of public observation and comment, or any instance prior to the issuance of the executive orders in which the time of the meeting had been noticed or the agenda for the meeting had been posted without also including notice of the manner of public observation and comment, a local agency would be able to satisfy this requirement by

¹ **Executive Order N-25-20**, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.12.20-EO-N-25-20-COVID-19.pdf>

² **Executive Order N-29-20**, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.17.20-N-29-20-EO.pdf>

³ *Ibid*



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advertising the means of public observation and comment using "the most rapid means of communication available at the time" within the meaning of California Government Code, section 54954(e); this includes, but is not limited to, posting the manner in which the public could participate on the agency's website.

The orders also provided flexibility for a legislative body to receive a "serial" or simultaneous communication outside of an open meeting, allowing all members of the legislative body to receive updates (including, but not limited to, simultaneous updates) relevant to the emergency (including, but not limited to, updates concerning the impacts of COVID-19, the government response to COVID-19, and other aspects relevant to the declared emergency) from federal, state, and local officials, and would be allowed to ask questions of those federal, state, and local officials, in order for members of the legislative body to stay apprised of emergency operations and the impact of the emergency on their constituents. Members of a local legislative body were explicitly not permitted to take action on, or to discuss amongst themselves, any item of business that was within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body without complying with requirements of the Brown Act.⁴

The Brown Act Executive Orders Sunset – September 30, 2021

On June 11, 2021, the Governor issued Executive Order N-08-21 which rescinds the aforementioned modifications made to the Brown Act, effective September 30, 2021.⁵ After that date, local agencies are required to observe all the usual Brown Act requirements *status quo ante* (as they existed prior to the issuance of the orders). Local agencies must once again ensure that the public is provided with access to a physical location from which they may observe a public meeting and offer public comment. Local agencies must also resume publication of the location of teleconferencing board members, post meeting notices and agendas in those locations, and make those locations available to the public in order to observe a meeting and provide public comment.

Following the Governor's September 16 signing of AB 361, the Governor's office contemplated immediately rescinding the remote public meeting authority provided under prior Executive Orders. Such action would have instantly impacted thousands of local agencies – potentially requiring them to cancel meetings or conduct in-person meetings or meetings pursuant to standard Brown Act teleconferencing requirements, notwithstanding the ongoing health directives related to the pandemic. After fruitful discussions between CSDA, the Governor's office, and other stakeholders on how to best assist local agencies to conduct meetings in an open and public manner, the Governor's office modified its approach and issued a revised Order on September 20, suspending the provisions of AB 361 and providing for a clear transition.⁶

Until September 30, local agencies should look to the revised Executive Order, [N-15-21](#), to determine how to conduct a particular meeting. The revised Order makes clear that, **until September 30**, local agencies may conduct open and public remote meetings relying on the

⁴ **Executive Order N-35-20**, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.21.20-EO-N-35-20.pdf>

⁵ **Executive Order N-08-21**, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/6.11.21-EO-N-08-21-signed.pdf>

⁶ **Executive Order N-15-21**, [gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/9.20.21-executive-order.pdf](https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/9.20.21-executive-order.pdf)



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authority provided under prior Executive Orders (rather than AB 361). The revised Order also explicitly permits a local agency to meet pursuant to the procedures provided in AB 361 **before** October 1, so long as the meeting is conducted in accordance with the requirements of AB 361. All local agencies should be aware that they **may not** conduct remote teleconference meetings pursuant to the authority in the Governor's prior Executive Orders **beyond September 30**; after that date, all meetings subject to the Brown Act must comply with standard teleconference requirements (as they existed "pre-pandemic") **OR** must comply with the newly enacted provisions of AB 361.

Any local agency that seeks to continue conducting remote teleconference meetings after September 30, **but has not taken action to transition to the provisions of AB 361**, may hold remote teleconference meetings under the standard requirements found within the Brown Act (i.e., subdivision (b) of Government Code section 54953, with remote meeting locations identified in the meeting agenda, meeting notices and agendas posted at all teleconference locations, teleconference locations accessible to the public, et cetera). Local agencies are strongly encouraged to swiftly begin preparations to ensure all Brown Act meetings and board actions taken via remote meetings after September 30 are done in a proper manner.

AB 361 – Flexibility for Remote Open Meetings During a Proclaimed State Emergency

Assembly Bill 361, introduced in February 2021 by Assembly Member Robert Rivas (D-30, Hollister) and sponsored by the California Special Districts Association, provides local agencies with the ability to meet remotely **during proclaimed state emergencies** under modified Brown Act requirements, similar in many ways to the rules and procedures established by the Governor's Executive Orders.

Important Note: AB 361's provisions can only be used in the event that a gubernatorial **state of emergency** 1) has been issued **AND** 2) remains active. It is **not sufficient** that county and/or city officials have issued a local emergency declaration – the emergency declaration must be one that is made pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act (CA GOVT § 8625).

Specifically, AB 361 suspends the requirements located in California Government Code, section 54953, subdivision (b), paragraph (3). What does this mean for local agencies? This means that, during a state of emergency, under specified circumstances, local agencies can meet pursuant to modified Brown Act requirements. Each of these modifications is broken out below.

The provisions enacted by AB 361 providing flexibility to meet remotely during a proclaimed emergency will sunset on January 1, 2024. This is subject to change if a future Legislature and Governor elect to extend the sunset or make the provisions permanent.



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AB 361 IMPACTS ON LOCAL AGENCY COMPLIANCE WITH THE BROWN ACT

Brown Act Requirement	Requirement under AB 361
If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, it shall post agendas at all teleconference locations and conduct teleconference meetings in a manner that protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or the public appearing before the legislative body of a local agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agendas not required to be posted at all teleconference locations Meeting must still be conducted in a manner that protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or the public appearing before the legislative body of a local agency

In the context of an emergency, members of the legislative body of a local agency may be teleconferencing from less-than-ideal locations – e.g., the private domicile of a friend or relative, a hotel room, an evacuation shelter, from a car, etc. The nature of the emergency may further compound this issue, as was the case during the COVID-19 outbreak and the necessity to implement social distancing measures. To address this issue, AB 361 provides relief from the obligation to post meeting agendas at all conference locations.

Although local agencies are relieved from this obligation, local agencies should endeavor to post meeting agendas at all usual locations where it remains feasible to do so.

Important Note: Local agencies must still provide advance notice of public meetings and must still post meeting agendas consistent with the provisions of the Brown Act. AB 361 does nothing to change the fact that meetings must still be noticed and agendized in advance.

Brown Act Requirement	Requirement under AB 361
If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, each teleconference location shall be identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting or proceeding, and each teleconference location shall be accessible to the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agendas are not required to identify each teleconference location in the meeting notice/agenda Local agencies are not required to make each teleconference location accessible to the public

Emergencies can – and often do – happen quickly. As was the case with the 2018 Camp Fire, individuals fleeing a disaster area may end up in disparate locations throughout the state. These impromptu, ad hoc locations are not ideal for conducting meetings consistent with the usual Brown Act requirements, which may impede local agencies seeking to meet promptly in response to calamity. To that end, AB 361 removes the requirement to document each teleconference location in meeting notices and agendas. Similarly, local agencies are not required to make these teleconference locations accessible to the public.

Brown Act Requirement	Requirement under AB 361
If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, during the teleconferenced meeting, at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body shall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No requirement to have a quorum of board members participate from within the territorial bounds of the local agency's jurisdiction



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participate from locations within the boundaries of the territory over which the local agency exercises jurisdiction.

The purpose of AB 361 is to assist local agencies with continuing their critical operations despite facing emergencies that pose a risk to human health and safety – emergencies which oftentimes correspond with advisory or mandatory evacuation orders (e.g., wildfires, earthquakes, gas leaks, etc.). An emergency which drives individuals from an area could make meeting within the bounds of a local agency impossible to do feasibly or safely. Accordingly, AB 361 allows for local agencies to disregard quorum requirements related to members of a legislative body teleconferencing from locations beyond the local agency's territory.

Brown Act Requirement	Requirement under AB 361
<p>If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, the agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly at each teleconference location.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In each instance in which notice of the time of the teleconferenced meeting is given or the agenda for the meeting is posted, the legislative body shall also give notice of the manner by which members of the public may access the meeting and offer public comment • The agenda shall identify and include an opportunity for all persons to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option • The legislative body shall allow members of the public to access the meeting, and the agenda shall include an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly • In the event of a disruption which prevents the local agency from broadcasting the meeting to members of the public using the call-in option or internet-based service option, or in the event of a disruption within the local agency's control which prevents members of the public from offering public comments using the call-in option or internet-based service option, the legislative body shall take no further action on items appearing on the meeting agenda until public access to the meeting via the call-in option or internet-based service option is restored



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written/remote public comment must be accepted until the point at which the public comment period is formally closed; registration/sign-up to provide/be recognized to provide public comment can only be closed when the public comment period is formally closed
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The right of individuals to attend the public meetings of local agencies and be face-to-face with their elected or appointed public officials is viewed as sacrosanct, only able to be abrogated in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Under normal conditions, local agencies are required to allow members of the public to participate in a public meeting from the very same teleconference locations that other board members are using to attend that meeting.

AB 361 solves the specific problem of what to do in circumstances when local agencies are holding their meetings remotely during an emergency and it would be unsafe to permit access to members of the public to the remote teleconference locations. AB 361 permits local agencies to meet without making teleconference locations available to members of the public, **provided that** members of the public are afforded the opportunity to provide public comment remotely as well.

Importantly, local agencies must ensure that the opportunity for the public to participate in a meeting remains as accessible as possible. This means that local agencies cannot discriminate against members of the public participating either remotely or in-person. In practice, this means:

- Local agencies must clearly advertise the means by which members of the public can observe a public meeting or offer comment during a meeting remotely, via either a call-in or internet-based option

Importantly, local agencies are required to provide the relevant remote access information to members of the public looking to attend a meeting of a local agency legislative body. This information includes, but is not limited to: phone numbers, passwords, URLs, email addresses, etc. Using this information, members of the public must be able to attend the meeting remotely. Any of the information related to participation must be included in the relevant meeting notice(s) and meeting agenda(s). If an agency fails to provide one or more of these key pieces of information in a meeting notice or agenda, the agency should not proceed with the meeting as-is, as it could result in any subsequent action being rendered null or void.

- Agencies whose meetings are interrupted by technological or similar technical disruptions must first resolve those issues before taking any other action(s) on items on the meeting agenda

In a notable departure from the terms of the Governor's orders, AB 361 explicitly requires that local agencies must first resolve any remote meeting disruption before proceeding to take further action on items appearing on a meeting agenda. In the event that a public comment line unexpectedly disconnects, a meeting agenda was sent out with the incorrect web link or dial-in



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information, the local agency's internet connection is interrupted, or other similar circumstances, a local agency is required to stop the ongoing meeting and work to resolve the issue before continuing with the meeting agenda.

Local agencies should ensure that the public remains able to connect to a meeting and offer public comment by the means previously advertised in the meeting notice or agenda. This may require directing staff to monitor the means by which the public can observe the meeting and offer comment to ensure that everything is operating as intended.

In the event that a meeting disruption within the control of the agency cannot be resolved, a local agency should not take any further action on agenda items; the local agency should end the meeting and address the disruption in the interim, or it may risk having its actions set aside in a legal action.

Important Note: *Test, test, test! Local agencies should be testing their remote meeting setup in advance of (and during) every meeting to ensure that there are no apparent issues. Local agency staff should attempt to attend the meeting in the same way(s) made available to members of the public and demonstrate that everything is working as intended. The fact that staff tested the system before and during a meeting and failed to detect any problems may become a key factor in any potential legal action against the agency.*

- Local agencies cannot require that written comments be submitted in advance of a meeting

It is not permissible to require that members of the public looking to provide public comment do so by submitting their comment(s) in advance of a meeting – in fact, not only is this a violation of AB 361's terms, it is also a violation of the Brown Act generally. Both AB 361 and the Brown Act explicitly require that members of the public be given the opportunity to provide public comment **directly** – that is, live and at any point prior to public comment being officially closed during a public meeting. Until such time during a meeting that the chairperson (or other authorized person) calls for a close to the public comment period, members of the public are allowed to submit their public comments directly or indirectly, orally, written, or otherwise.

- Local agencies may only close registration for public comment at the same time the public comment period is closed, and must accept public comment until that point

Local agencies cannot require that individuals looking to provide public comment register in advance of a meeting (though agencies may extend the **possibility** of advance registration or commenting as a **non-mandatory** option). Nor may local agencies require that individuals looking to provide public comment register in advance of the agenda item being deliberated by a local agency. Local agencies may only close registration for public comment at the same time that they close the public comment period for all. Until the public comment period is completely closed for all, members of the public must be permitted to register for, and provide, public comment.



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Local agencies that agendize a comment period for each agenda item cannot close the public comment period for the agenda item, or the opportunity to register to provide public comment, until that agendized public comment period has elapsed.

Local agencies that do not provide an agendized public comment period but instead take public comment separately on an informal, ad hoc basis on each agenda item must allow a reasonable amount of time per agenda item to allow public members the opportunity to provide public comment, including time for members of the public to register or otherwise be recognized for the purpose of providing public comment.

Local agencies with an agendized general public comment period that does not correspond to a specific agenda item (i.e., one occurring at the start of a meeting, covering all agenda items at once) cannot close the public comment period or the opportunity to register until the general public comment period has elapsed.

Brown Act Requirement	Requirement under AB 361
<p>A member of the public shall not be required, as a condition to attendance at a meeting of a legislative body of a local agency, to register his or her name, to provide other information, to complete a questionnaire, or otherwise to fulfill any condition precedent to his or her attendance.</p> <p>If an attendance list, register, questionnaire, or other similar document is posted at or near the entrance to the room where the meeting is to be held, or is circulated to the persons present during the meeting, it shall state clearly that the signing, registering, or completion of the document is voluntary, and that all persons may attend the meeting regardless of whether a person signs, registers, or completes the document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual desiring to provide public comment through the use of an internet website, or other online platform, not under the control of the local legislative body that requires registration to log in to a teleconference, may be required to register as required by the third-party internet website or online platform to participate

“Zoom meetings” became ubiquitous during the COVID-19 pandemic – for good reason. The Zoom video teleconferencing software was free (with some “premium” features even made temporarily free to all users), easily deployed, and user-friendly. All one needed was a Zoom account and then they’d be able to make use of the platform’s meeting services, hosting and attending various meetings as they pleased.

Unfortunately, the Brown Act has long prohibited the use of mandatory registration or “sign-ups” to attend public meetings or to provide public comment. Privacy and good governance concerns prohibit such information gathering from members of the public seeking to remain anonymous while also engaging with their government. Accordingly, it would normally be a concern to use any teleconference platform which may require participants to register for an account even when it is not the local agency establishing that requirement.



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AB 361 resolves this issue by explicitly allowing local agencies to use platforms which, incidental to their use and deployment, may require users to register for an account with that platform so long as the platform is not under the control of the local agency.

Important Note: *Just because you “can” doesn’t mean you “should.” There are products on the market that do not require individuals to sign up for/sign in to an account to participate in a remote meeting. Local agencies are heavily discouraged from contacting their remote meeting platform vendor in an attempt to uncover information about meeting attendees.*

RESOLUTIONS: ENACTING ASSEMBLY BILL 361

A local agency wishing to rely on the provisions of AB 361 must meet one of the following criteria:

- (A) The local agency is holding a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency, and state or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing; or
- (B) The local agency is holding a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency for the purpose of determining, by majority vote, whether as a result of the emergency, meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees; or
- (C) The local agency is holding a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency and has determined, by majority vote, that, as a result of the emergency, meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees.

These criteria permit a local agency to schedule a remote meeting to determine whether meeting in-person during the state of emergency would pose imminent risk to the health or safety of attendees. At that remote meeting, a local agency may determine by majority vote that sufficient risks exist to the health or safety of attendees as a result of the emergency and pass a resolution to that effect. These criteria also permit a local agency to meet remotely in the event that there is a state of emergency declaration while state or local officials have recommended or required measures to promote social distancing.

If a local agency passes a resolution by majority vote that meeting in-person during the state of emergency would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees, the resolution would permit meeting under the provisions of AB 361 for a maximum period of 30 days. After 30 days, the local agency would need to renew its resolution, consistent with the requirements of AB 361, if the agency desires to continue meeting under the modified Brown Act requirements, or allow the resolution to lapse.

Important Note: *Consider referencing [the initial sample resolution linked on this page \(click here\)](#) in crafting your agency’s initial resolution effecting the transition to these modified Brown Act requirements. While this sample resolution is provided for the benefit of local agencies, consult your legal counsel to review your agency’s resolution before its consideration at a public meeting.*



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After 30 days, a local agency is required to renew its resolution effecting the transition to the modified Brown Act requirements if it desires to continue meeting under those modified requirements.

Importantly, the ability to renew the resolution is subject to certain requirements and conditions. In order to renew the resolution, a local agency must:

- Reconsider the circumstances of the state of emergency
- Having reconsidered the state of emergency, determine that either
 - The state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person, or
 - State or local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing

AB 361 requires that the renewal of the resolution effecting the transition to the modified Brown Act requirements must be based on findings that the state of emergency declaration remains active, the local agency has thoughtfully reconsidered the circumstances of the state of emergency, and the local agency has either identified A) ongoing, direct impacts to the ability to meet safely in-person or B) active social distancing measures as directed by relevant state or local officials.

Important Note: Consider referencing [the subsequent adoption sample resolution linked on this page \(click here\)](#) in crafting your agency's renewal resolution renewing the transition to these modified Brown Act requirements. While this sample resolution is provided for the benefit of local agencies, consult your legal counsel to review your agency's resolution before its consideration at a public meeting.

Important Note: If your agency does not meet again before the 30 day period during which the resolution remains active, the resolution will lapse for lack of action by the agency. After a resolution has lapsed, if the agency seeks to meet remotely again under the modified Brown Act requirements, it must pass a new initial resolution effecting the transition to the modified Brown Act requirements, subject to the same substantive and procedural requirements as before.



**California Special
Districts Association**
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AB 361 PROCESS: AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. An emergency situation arises. The specific nature of the emergency produces an imminent risk to public health and safety.
2. A state of emergency is declared (pursuant to CA GOVT § 8625).
3. A local agency wishes to meet remotely via teleconferencing as a result of the emergency. A meeting notice/agenda are produced and posted, with an agenda item dedicated to consideration of a resolution to transition to teleconferenced meetings consistent with the terms of CA GOVT § 54953, subdivision (e).
4. A resolution is passed consistent with the terms of CA GOVT § 54953, subdivision (e), paragraph (1), subparagraph (B) (i.e., a resolution passed by majority vote determining that meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees).¹ This resolution is valid for 30 days.
5. 30 days later: if the state of emergency remains active, a local agency may act to renew its resolution effecting the transition to teleconferenced meetings by passing another resolution, consistent with the terms of CA GOVT § 54953, subdivision (e), paragraph (3) (i.e., a resolution which includes findings that legislative body has both 1) reconsidered the circumstances of the state of emergency, and 2) the state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person.²

¹ Alternatively, in lieu of a resolution finding that meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees, a local agency may use modified Brown Act procedures when state/local officials recommend/require measures to promote social distancing.

² Should state/local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing, this may instead be used as a basis for renewing a resolution (as opposed to the fact that the state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person).

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