



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA LETTER

Department Name:

Board of Supervisors

Department Number:

011

Agenda Date:

August 18, 2026

Placement:

Set-Hearing

Estimated Time:

Continued Item:

No

If Yes, date from:

Vote Required:

Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Steve Lavagnino, Fifth District Office

CONTACT: Cory Bantilan, Chief of Staff (805) 680-2226

SUBJECT: Set Hearing to Consider Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Chapter 23 of the County Code to Regulate Possession of Catalytic Converters

CB for SL

Concurrences:

County Counsel Concurrence:

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors set a hearing to consider recommendations regarding the adoption of an Ordinance Amending Chapter 23 of the County Code to Regulate Possession of Catalytic Converters, as follows:

- a) Approve the introduction (First Reading) of an Ordinance adding Chapter 23, Article VI, Sections 23-38 through 23-41 to the Santa Barbara County Ordinance Code regulating possession of catalytic converters;
- b) Read the title, “An Ordinance of the County of Santa Barbara adding Chapter 23, Article VI, Sections 23-38 through 23-41 to the Santa Barbara County Ordinance Code Regulating Possession of Catalytic Converters” and waive further reading of the Ordinance; and
- c) Set a hearing for the Administrative Agenda of October 6, 2026 to consider the adoption (Second Reading) of the Ordinance, as follows:
 - i. Adopt “An Ordinance of the County of Santa Barbara adding Chapter 23, Article VI, Sections 23-38 through 23-41 to the Santa Barbara County Ordinance Code Regulating Possession of Catalytic Converters” (Second Reading); and
 - ii. Determine that the above actions are organizational or administrative activities of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment and are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Summary Text:

This Board Agenda Letter sets a hearing for September 22, 2026, to consider adding a new article to Chapter 23 of the County Code, regulating possession of catalytic converters.

State law currently criminalizes possession of 9 or more detached, cut catalytic converters. This allows an individual to legally possess up to 8 detached catalytic converters, which serves no lawful purpose. Law enforcement does not currently have the tools to arrest an individual they suspect of engaging in catalytic converter theft without catching them in the act or in the possession of 9 or more converters.

The proposed ordinance includes a \$1,000 fine for a first offense, \$3,000 for a second, and \$5,000 for a third. It includes an exemption for licensed recyclers and does not regulate the possession of new catalytic converters.

Similar ordinances have recently been adopted by a majority of Southern California counties as well as dozens of cities.

Background:

Catalytic converter theft has become a major problem in California and throughout the country. The high value of the precious metals, such as rhodium, palladium and platinum, contained within

catalytic converters and the ease with which criminals can remove the devices from the vehicles of unsuspecting residents make catalytic converters an enticing target.

Recent state legislation seems to have resulted in a decrease in the number of catalytic converter thefts. However, the state legislation does not provide local law enforcement with the mechanisms to make arrests in many cases. Currently law enforcement cannot seize a catalytic converter found to have been removed from a vehicle and in someone's possession unless a victim can be identified. Unfortunately, locating the victim without identifying information on the catalytic converter is often impossible.

To deter thefts of catalytic converters and to enhance the capability of law enforcement to arrest and prosecute those suspected of carrying out such crimes, the proposed ordinance makes it unlawful for any person who is not a licensed recycler to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle unless the person has a valid proof of ownership of the catalytic converter.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts: N/A

Staffing Impacts: N/A

Special Instructions:

After the August 18, 2026, set hearing, direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the attached Catalytic Converter Notice of Public Hearing (Attachment A) in the Santa Barbara Independent five (5) days prior to the First Reading.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Catalytic Converter Notice of Public Hearing

Contact Information:

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