



AB 766 – Safe Streets Bill

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BACKGROUND

Many cities in California struggle to deal with excessive speed on local roads, which can thereby pose a significant threat to public safety. One contributing factor is required periodic engineering and traffic surveys which can lead to an increased speed limit on local roads because many drivers continually drive faster than posted speed limits. Under current law, local governments have only limited ability to adjust speed limits on local roadways to account for public safety.

In 2008, in the City of Glendale there were 82 Pedestrian Related Traffic Collisions and 4 Pedestrian Fatalities. According to recent data from 2001, nearly 20% of the traffic fatalities in California are pedestrians. A major contributing factor in many of these fatalities is excessive speeding by motorists.

EXISTING LAW

Requires that any section of road in which a local entity has adopted a prima facie speed limit, and the enforcement of the limit involves the use of radar, the entity must conduct an engineering and traffic survey every seven years.

THIS BILL

AB 766 would allow a local entity to retain existing prima facie speed limits on a street only if certain conditions are met. In order to retain the existing speed limit, a local entity must conduct a public hearing and then make an official finding that a higher speed limit would not improve the flow of traffic, nor would it promote a safe environment for the neighborhood or pedestrians.

Additionally, this measure provides that if the local entity conducts a public hearing and makes an official finding, then the existing prima facie speed limit does not need to be rejustified by an engineering and traffic survey.

SUMMARY

This measure would provide local governments with a means of increasing pedestrian and community safety by limiting increases in speed limits on local streets. Under current law, if local law enforcement wish to use radar enforcement of a speed limit then an engineering and traffic survey must be conducted every seven years. The local speed limit can then be modified based on the results of the survey. Often times an engineering and traffic survey will show that motorists are consistently driving above the posted speed limit and therefore an increase in the speed limit is needed.

This bill gives local governments some limited control over vehicle speed and safety within their jurisdiction. Unfortunately, the current process does not place enough value on the safety of pedestrians and those who live on or near the street being surveyed. This measure allows local governments, through a public process, to give consideration to pedestrian safety when the review of local speed limits occurs.

This bill aims to provide local governments with an additional tool to keep the speeds traveled on local roads at a safe level for drivers, pedestrians, and communities as a whole. This bill balances the ability of drivers to safely drive on City streets at a reasonable speed with the needs of residents and pedestrians to be able to access those same streets without an undue risk of a collision, thus enhancing both community safety and traffic flow.

BILL STATUS

2/26/2009: Introduced

4/27/2009: Assembly Transportation Committee

SUPPORT

Sponsor: City of Glendale

City of Oakland

City of Los Angeles

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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