



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
The Honorable Frank Bigelow, Vice Chair
Assembly Committee on Appropriations
California State Legislature
1020 N Street, Room 112
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chairperson Gonzalez and Vice Chairperson Bigelow:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups, and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent crashes, save lives, and reduce costs, opposes Assembly Bill (AB) 122. This legislation will allow bicyclists to proceed through an intersection controlled by a stop sign without stopping if no vehicle is in the intersection or constitutes an immediate hazard to the cyclists while they are in the intersection. Similarly, if a vehicle is in an intersection or approaching, bicyclists would be permitted to proceed after yielding, not stopping. The bill makes no provision to require that bicyclists stop, or even yield, for other road users including pedestrians and bicyclists. AB 122 will weaken current law, upend the predictability of stop sign requirements, and unnecessarily expose bicyclists, pedestrians and all roadway users to an increased risk of preventable crashes.

In 2019, 3,606 people were killed on California roads according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Nearly 31 percent of those killed (1,105 people) were bicyclists and pedestrians. Moreover, preliminary estimates from NHTSA indicate that the national fatality rate and total for the first nine months of 2020 increased over the same time period in 2019. This is in line with troubling trends reported across the country, and confirmed by NHTSA, of drivers engaged in riskier driving behaviors including speeding, impairment, and lack of seat belt use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Media and analytics reports note distraction increased as well. Traffic fatalities on California roads are a public health and safety epidemic in urgent need of effective remedies. Weakening a clear and essential traffic safety law is a step in the wrong direction.

Stop signs are installed to assign right of way, to control vehicle to vehicle and vehicle to bicyclist and pedestrian interactions, and to control traffic in areas with a restricted view or when crash records indicate a need for a stop sign. The safety improvements ensuing from stop sign placement result from the clear message it provides -- vehicles must stop when they encounter the sign.

AB 122 would essentially turn stop signs into yield signs for certain roadway users under certain conditions. It erodes the predictability and therefore a primary safety benefit of a stop sign. Additionally, the bill contradicts an essential recommendation from NHTSA for bicyclist safety, which is for bicyclists to "drive predictably." Furthermore, if bicyclists are given an exemption from obeying stop signs, other road users may request similar exemptions from current law leading to an even greater erosion of safety.

We urge you to oppose AB 122 and protect the integrity of current and longstanding stop sign laws.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

cc: Assembly Committee on Appropriations Members