



May 19, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks, Chair
The Honorable Kate Sanchez, Vice Chair
Assembly Committee on Appropriations
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chair Wicks and Vice Chair Sanchez:

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, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports enactment of Assembly Bill (AB) 981 to establish an intelligent speed assistance (ISA) pilot program for people convicted of excessive speeding, reckless driving or racing offenses in Los Angeles, San Diego, Fresno, Sacramento and Kern counties. This safety upgrade is critical and timely.

Traffic fatalities have risen over the past decade in California, and speeding is a major contributor. In 2023, 4,061 people lost their lives on California roads, a 31 percent increase since 2014.ⁱ 32 percent of those fatalities involved speeding, and speeding related fatalities increased 31 percent from 2014-2023.ⁱⁱ Deaths among vulnerable road users (VRU) have increased too, as fatalities rose 56 percent for pedestrians and 12 percent for bicyclists and other cyclists during the same period.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to being tragic, these preventable deaths are costly. The Golden State incurred \$29.1 billion in economic damage, the most of any state, which is equivalent to a “crash tax” of \$736 per resident each year according to a 2019 analysis.^{iv} When updated for inflation alone, in 2025, costs would equate to \$36.7 billion and \$929 respectively.^v

Los Angeles, San Diego, Fresno, Sacramento and Kern counties suffer from a high and rising level of traffic fatalities. In 2023, each ranked 8th or higher in traffic fatalities among California counties with Los Angeles County having the most traffic fatalities.^{vi} Moreover, all five counties experienced double digit increases in traffic fatalities from 2019-2023 with traffic fatalities increasing 19 percent in Sacramento, 15 percent in Kern, 13 percent in Los Angeles, 11 percent in Fresno and 10 percent in San Diego.^{vii} 40 percent of the state’s traffic fatalities in 2023 occurred in these counties.^{viii}

ISA is technology that can identify the speed limit in real time and limit the speed of vehicles exceeding the specified threshold. A recent study on an ISA pilot program in New York City that involved 500 city fleet vehicles and over 2.9 million miles of driving showed ISA produced a 64 percent reduction in overall speeding and an 82 percent decrease on high-speed roads.^{ix} Due to the program’s success, it is now being expanded to 2,100 vehicles.^x

ISA technology is urgently needed because excess speed contributes to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes and proves especially dangerous for VRUs such as pedestrians, bicyclists and roadside first responders who lack the protective structure of a vehicle. Small increases in speed cause serious declines in safety. The average risk of death for a pedestrian is 10 percent at an impact speed of 23 mph, 25 percent at 32 mph, and 50 percent at 42 mph.^{xi} Vehicle occupants suffer its impacts as well, crash tests showed that modest five to 10 mile-per-hour (mph) increases in speed can have a severe impact on a driver’s risk of injury or death.^{xii}

This month, Washington enacted ISA legislation, Virginia did so in April and the District of Columbia, last year. We urge California to become a leader in this safety trend and advance this bill.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

ⁱ State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

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ⁱⁱⁱ State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.

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- iv The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>.
- v CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2025, available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.
- vi State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.
- vii State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.
- viii State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at <https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm>.
- ix New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services. (2024, October 30). DCAS & U.S. DOT Volpe Announce Municipal Speeding Reduction of 64% in New Report on Intelligent Speed Assistance [Press release] available [here](#).
- x Ibid.
- xi Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Sep. 2011., available at <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2011PedestrianRiskVsSpeedReport.pdf>.
- xii Impact of Speeds on Drivers and Vehicles – Results from Crash Tests, AAA Foundation for Safety, Humanetics, and IIHS, Jan. 2021, available at <https://www.iihs.org/api/datastoredocument/bibliography/2218>.