

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Jim Frazier, Chair
AB 28 (Chu) – As Amended April 22, 2015

SUBJECT: Bicycle safety: rear lights

SUMMARY: Authorizes bicycles to have a solid red light or a flashing red light on the rear in place of the required red reflector.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires that a bicycle operated during darkness be equipped with all of the following:
 - a) A white light that illuminates the road in front of the bicyclist and is visible from a distance of 300 feet in front and from the sides of the bicycle.
 - b) A red reflector on the rear that is visible from a distance of 500 feet when directly in front of lawful upper beams of vehicle headlights.
 - c) A white or yellow reflector on each pedal, shoe, or ankle visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from a distance of 200 feet.
 - d) A white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle, and a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle, except that bicycles that are equipped with reflectorized tires on the front and the rear need not be equipped with these side reflectors.
- 2) Requires that reflectors and reflectorized tires be of a type meeting requirements established by the California Highway Patrol.
- 3) Authorizes that the front white light be attached to the bicyclist rather than the bicycle as long as it meets the visibility requirements.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: A recent report from the Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA) on bicycle safety found that bicyclist fatalities increased 16% nationwide between 2010 and 2012. California had the highest number of fatalities of any state during that time period at 338. The report additionally noted that in 2012, nearly 27% of bicyclist death nationwide happened between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The report noted that enhancing bicycle visibility through lighting is important, but did not address the extent to which visibility played a role in nighttime fatal crashes.

Under current law, bicycles are required to be equipped with a front light and a variety of reflectors, including a red one on the rear of the bike that is visible from a distance of 500 feet when directly in front of a vehicle's headlights. The federal Consumer Products Safety Commission requires that all bicycles sold in the United States be equipped with this rear reflector, which must meet standards set by the commission.

This bill authorizes a bicycle to be equipped with a solid red light or a flashing red light in place of the red reflector. If a bicyclist wishes to remove the red reflector that his or her bicycle comes with and replace it with a rear light, arguably the bicyclist is no longer in compliance with the law even though there is no sacrifice in terms of visibility, which is the purpose of the reflector requirement. The author wants to encourage bicyclists to be as visible as possible at night and believes lights are a part of the solution. This simple change to the law ensures that rear lights are authorized should a bicyclist choose to use them.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

AFSCME

Opposition

None on file

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