

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 604 (Olsen) – As Amended April 20, 2015

SUBJECT: Electrically motorized skateboards

SUMMARY: Defines "electrically motorized skateboard" and authorizes cities and counties to regulate their use. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Defines "electrically motorized skateboard" as any four-wheeled device that has a floorboard designed to be stood upon when riding that is not greater than 60 inches deep and 18 inches wide, is designed to transport only one person, and has an electric propulsion system averaging less than 1,000 watts, the maximum speed of which, when powered solely by a propulsion system on a paved level surface, is no more than 20 miles per hour.
- 2) Specifies that an electrically motorized skateboard may be designed to also be powered by human propulsion.
- 3) Specifies that an electrically motorized skateboard is not a motorized skateboard for purposes of an existing ban on motorized skateboards on sidewalks, roadways, highways, bikeways, bicycle paths, bike trails, equestrian trails, hiking trails, and recreational trails.
- 4) Provides that an electrically motorized skateboard is not an electric personal assistive mobility device, a motorcycle, a motor-driven cycle, a motorized bicycle or moped, or a motorized scooter.
- 5) Authorizes local authority to adopt rules and regulations by ordinance or resolution prohibiting or restricting persons from riding or propelling electrically motorized skateboards on highways, sidewalks, or roadways.
- 6) Authorizes a transit development board to adopt ordinances, rules, or regulations to restrict, or specify the conditions for, the use of electrically motorized skateboards on property under the control of, or any portion of property used by, the board.
- 7) Authorizes public agencies, including, but not limited to, the Regents of the University of California and the Trustees of the California State University, to adopt rules or regulations to restrict, or specify the conditions for, the use of electrically motorized skateboards on public property under the jurisdiction of that agency.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Prohibits motorized skateboards on sidewalks, roadways, highways, bikeways, bicycle paths, trails, equestrian trails, hiking trails, and recreational trails.
- 2) Authorizes local authorities to adopt rules and regulations by ordinance or resolution prohibiting or restricting persons from riding skateboards on highways, sidewalks, or roadways.

- 3) Authorizes a transit development board to adopt ordinances, rules, or regulations to restrict, or specify the conditions for, the use of bicycles, motorized bicycles, skateboards, and roller skates on property under the control of, or any portion of property used by, the board.
- 4) Authorizes public agencies, including, but not limited to, the Regents of the University of California and the Trustees of the California State University, to adopt rules or regulations to restrict, or specify the conditions for, the use of bicycles, motorized bicycles, skateboards, and roller skates on public property under the jurisdiction of that agency.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Current law prohibits the use of motorized skateboards in California. This prohibition has been in place since 1977 and came about in response to skateboards that were being equipped with loud, polluting gas motors and that had no brakes or other safety features. The motorized skateboard of the 21st century is a very different product. The boards are difficult to distinguish from regular skateboards while in use, are silent and produce no emissions, and include brakes.

AB 604 defines an electrically motorized skateboard and authorizes local governments and other specified entities, such as universities on their campuses, to regulate their use. Effectively, the bill treats electrically motorized skateboards the same way that current law treats skateboards. According to the author, the current prohibition on motorized skateboards "directly affects manufacturers that build this product right here in California. It is unacceptable that an environmentally conscious and safe product, assembled and designed in our state, cannot be legally operated under existing law."

California has established bold policy goals around reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing a more multi-modal transportation network so that people do not have to be reliant on cars. However, outdated laws sometimes stand in the way of tools that could help achieve those goals, even in small ways. AB 604 recognizes that innovations in motorized skateboards have moved their design well beyond the product that led to the state's ban and provides a framework for authorizing their use subject to local discretion.

Proposed amendment: The committee may wish to consider asking the author to amend AB 604 to prohibit the use of an electrically motorized skateboard by anyone under 16. Younger children may not have the level of maturity or judgment necessary to safely operate a motorized device and are likely to be less familiar with the rules of the road.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

California Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians

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