Date of Hearing: June 26, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Jim Frazier, Chair
SB 672 (Fuller) – As Introduced February 17, 2017

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: Traffic-actuated signals: motorcycles and bicycles

SUMMARY: Removes the sunset on the requirement that cities and counties, when installing traffic-actuated signals, install and maintain systems that can detect bicycles and motorcycles, thereby making the requirement permanent.

EXISTING LAW:

1) Provides that a traffic-actuated signal is a traffic signal that is triggered by the presence of traffic.

2) Requires cities, counties, and cities and counties, until January 1, 2018, when installing or replacing a traffic-actuated signal, to install and maintain the signal so as to detect lawful bicycle or motorcycle traffic on the roadway.

3) Provides that cities, counties, and cities and counties shall not be required to install traffic-actuated signals that detect bicycles and motorcycles until the state Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in consultation with these entities, has established uniform standards, specifications, and guidelines for implementation.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

COMMENTS: Traffic-actuated signals change when they detect a vehicle is waiting at the stop sign rather than simply changing the signal on a pre-set interval. By adapting signal changes to traffic volume, traffic actuated signals help maintain the flow of traffic and improve safety. Older-style traffic-actuated signals work by detecting vehicles using loop detectors that are imbedded in the pavement. With these older-style traffic-actuated signals, the vehicle's weight causes the loop to be closed thus prompting a signal change.

Because loop detectors rely on a vehicle's mass to close the loop and prompt a signal change, smaller vehicles such as motorcycles and bicycles go undetected by these systems. As a result, motorcycles and bicycles must either wait until a vehicle approaches to trigger a signal change or simply cross "against the light," a maneuver that is dangerous and can have severe, and sometimes even fatal, consequences.

To improve safety, AB 1581 (Fuller), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2007, required cities and counties, when upgrading or replacing traffic-actuated signals or replacing the loop detectors, to install and maintain the systems that can detect smaller vehicles such as motorcycles and bicycles. AB 1581 contained provisions specifying that cities and counties were not required to install bicycle- and motorcycle-friendly systems until the Caltrans established uniform standards, specifications,

and guidelines for the detection of bicycles and motorcycles by traffic-actuated signals. This bill also included a sunset date of January 1, 2018.

On August 27, 2009, Caltrans issued Traffic Operations Policy Directive 09-06, requiring the incorporation of devices used to detect the presence or passage of vehicles (including motorcycles), bicycles, or pedestrians at signals. This policy directive included specifications for the detection systems, established requirements for where detectors should be placed relative to the stop limit line and signal light intervals. These requirements and specification were ultimately included in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

As required by AB 1581, local jurisdictions have been installing detection systems for bicyclists and motorcyclists when installing or maintaining traffic-actuated systems. Several cities contacted by the committee indicate that the costs associated with upgrading the systems to detect bicycles and motorcycles are minor

Committee comments: Since cities and counties are currently complying with the requirements set forth in AB 1581, extending the requirement indefinitely by eliminating the sunset will continue to improve safety for all roadway users at minimal cost.

Previous legislation: AB 1581 (Fuller), Chapter 337, Statutes of 2007, requires, cities and counties, upon first placement of a traffic-actuated signal or replacement of the loop detector of a traffic-actuated signal, to install those signals that detect motorcycle and bicycle traffic on the roadway, until January 1, 2018.

AB 2521 (La Suer) of 2002 would have required that traffic-actuated traffic signals be capable of being actuated by bicycles and motorcycles. AB 2521 was vetoed by Governor Davis because the measure would have resulted in unknown reimbursable state-mandated costs on local government.

AB 930 (Thompson) of 1998 would have authorized the use of specialized traffic control signals for bicycles, contingent upon Caltrans guidelines. AB 930 was vetoed by Governor Wilson, citing the reimbursable mandated costs to local agencies as his primary concern.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support
Automobile Club of Southern California
ABATE of California
American Motorcyclist Association
California Association of Bicycling Organizations

Opposition
None on file

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