

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2018

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 2955 (Friedman) – As Amended March 19, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Traffic: City of Burbank and City of Glendale

**SUMMARY:** Authorizes the cities of Burbank and Glendale to consider equestrian safety when conducting traffic surveys and setting speed limits in the boundaries of the Rancho Master Plan area.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), after consultation with local agencies and public hearings, to adopt rules and regulations prescribing uniform standards and specifications for all official traffic control devices, including, but not limited to, stop signs, yield right-of-way signs, speed restriction signs, railroad warning approach signs, street name signs, lines and markings on the roadway, and stock crossing signs.
- 2) Requires an engineering and traffic survey to include, among other requirements deemed necessary by Caltrans, consideration of all of the following:
  - a) Prevailing speeds as determined by traffic engineering measurements;
  - b) Accident records; and,
  - c) Highway, traffic, and roadside conditions not readily apparent to the driver.
- 3) Permits local authorities to additionally consider all of the following when conducting an engineering and traffic survey:
  - a) Residential density, if any of the following conditions exist on the particular portion of highway and the property contiguous thereto, other than a business district:
    - i) Upon one side of the highway, within a distance of a quarter of a mile, the contiguous property fronting thereon is occupied by 13 or more separate dwelling houses or business structures;
    - ii) Upon both sides of the highway, collectively, within a distance of a quarter of a mile, the contiguous property fronting thereon is occupied by 16 or more separate dwelling houses or business structures; or,
    - iii) The portion of highway is longer than one-quarter of a mile but has the ratio of separate dwelling houses or business structures to the length of the highway described in either of the above.
  - b) Pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

- 4) Permits local authorities in the County of Orange, when conducting an engineer and traffic survey of the public streets within the boundaries of the common interest development known as Orange Park Acres, to consider equestrian safety.
- 5) Permits local authorities in the City of Norco, when conducting an engineer and traffic survey, to consider equestrian safety.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** None, this bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

*Setting Speed Limits:* Existing law requires Caltrans, after consultation with local agencies and public hearings, to adopt rules and regulations that prescribe uniform standards and specifications for traffic control devices, including the posting of speed limits. Caltrans adopts these rules as the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which, among other things, prescribes the process for setting speed limits in this state.

In California and elsewhere, speed limits are generally set in accordance with engineering and traffic surveys, which measure prevailing vehicular speeds and establish the limit at or near the 85th percentile (*i.e.*, the speed that 15% of motorists exceed). California uses the 85th percentile to set speed limits except in cases where the limit is set in state law, such as the 25 mile per hour (mph) limit in residence districts and school zones, or where an engineering and traffic survey shows that other safety-related factors suggest that a lower speed limit is warranted. These safety-related factors, as prescribed by law, include accident data; highway, traffic, and roadway conditions not readily apparent to the driver; residential density; and pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Speed limits are allowed to deviate from the 85th percentile in a couple of ways. First, if 85th percentile is not in an increment of 5 mph, MUTCD requires the speed limit to be rounded to the nearest 5 mph limit. So if the 85th percentile is 32 mph, the speed limit can be rounded down to 30 mph. If the 85th percentile is 34 mph, it must be rounded up to 35 mph. In the first example, traffic surveyors are allowed to reduce the speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph based on accident records, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and the density of the area. In the second example, traffic surveyors would be allowed to round down to 30 mph, but are prohibited from lowering the speed limit any further.

Existing law allows traffic surveyors to also take into account equestrian safety in the City of Norco and within the Orange Park Acres development in Orange County.

*Rancho Master Plan:* This bill extends to the cities of Burbank and Glendale the ability to have their traffic surveyor's also consider equestrian safety when setting speed limits in the area of the Rancho Master Plan. The Rancho Master plan is an area located in the southeast corner of Burbank. Special land use policies were adopted in 1993 to protect the unique equestrian nature of the Rancho area. The area is 10,966 acres, more than half of which is residential, commercial and industrial. The city of Burbank never adopted the Master Plan, but special land use policies were put into effect to preserve and protect the existing equestrian character of the Rancho area. The Master Plan was intended to have a Neighborhood Protection Plan to deal with traffic impacts and mitigation.

It is unclear at this time what parts of Glendale would be affected by this bill, as the Rancho Master Plan, which was never adopted, is located exclusively in Burbank. Nonetheless, Glendale, writing in support, states that “Having the ability to consider equestrian safety as a safety-related factor in order to decrease posted speed limits in the Rancho area of Glendale will help protect the unique equestrian nature of the area, as many of our residents travel through the neighborhood by horse, often traversing the same roads as vehicles.”

*Committee comments:* While the Rancho area of Burbank and the Rancho Riverside neighborhood of Glendale are unique in their preservation of equestrian areas in an otherwise highly urban neighborhood, it is unclear as to what effect this bill would have on speed limits. The current speed limits appear to have no effect on equestrian safety, as no evidence has been provided that there has been any accidents involving horses in Burbank, and only one accident involving a horse has occurred in the City of Glendale in the last decade.

While the author wishes to extend the provisions of this bill to the parts of Glendale where the accident occurred, the provision limiting this bill’s application to the Rancho Master Plan may prevent that from happening. Further, because the Rancho Master Plan was never adopted by Burbank, it is unclear what areas of Burbank would be covered as well. This could lead to a challenge of any speed limit reduced for this reason. The author may wish to better clarify what portions of Burbank and Glendale should be covered by this proposal.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

City of Burbank  
City of Glendale

##### **Opposition**

Safer Streets L.A.  
Western States Trucking Association

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