

Date of Hearing: June 13, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 176 (Luz Rivas) – As Introduced April 18, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Cruising

**SUMMARY:** Recognizes the cultural significance of cruising in California and encourages local officials and law enforcement to work with local car clubs to conduct safe cruising events. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Describes cruising.
- 2) Details the history of cruising in California, with a specific emphasis of its history in the San Fernando Valley.
- 3) Declares that the Legislature celebrates the history and culture of cruising and encourages local officials and law enforcement to work with local car clubs to conduct safe cruising events.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Prohibits drivers from operating a vehicle at such a slow speed as to impede or block the normal and reasonable movement of traffic unless the reduced speed is necessary for safe operation, because of a grade, or in compliance with law.
- 2) Authorizes local authorities to adopt rules and regulations regulating cruising.
- 3) Defines “cruising” as the repetitive driving of a motor vehicle past a traffic control point in traffic that is congested at or near the traffic control point, as determined by the ranking peace officer on duty within the affected area, within a specified time period and after the vehicle operator has been given an adequate written notice that further driving past the control point will be a violation of the ordinance.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:**

“Candy paint jobs with glimmering specks of metallics. Custom upholstery of magenta velvet. Bouncing hydraulics cruising low and slow. The names ‘Purple Rain’ and ‘Erotic City’ gleaming from the lacquered frames.” According to Smithsonian Magazine, these are the words that could only describe the famous lowriders belonging to L.A.’s Chicano community.

Cruising in lowriders has been an important subculture in California for decades, popularized by Chicano communities after World War II as the “hot rod” trend began to sweep the country. Lowriders are customized cars with lowered bodies, often painted in colorful designs that are often fitted with hydraulics to allow height adjustable suspension. Lowriders are displayed in events involving cars slowly moving down a street in a repetitive manner, referred to as cruising. Lowriders have taken on a political function, with cruising events serving as fundraisers for the

United Farm Workers Labor Union, political fundraisers, COVID-19 vaccine drives, and participating in the census.

Cruising became popularized nationally after the release of *American Graffiti*, the breakout film for George Lucas and Harrison Ford. *American Graffiti*, released in 1973, was a coming of age comedy-drama set in 1960s Modesto, California featuring a group of friends cruising the streets before heading off to college. The film went on to be nominated for an Oscar for “best film”, and has been recognized by the Library of Congress as a film for preservation in the National Film Registry. It remains one of the most profitable movies ever made, grossing \$200 million on a less than a \$1 million budget. The summer after the movie came out, San Rafael’s main street was clogged with cars seeking to reenact the movie’s cruising scenes, but was subsequently shut down by police.

Cities across California began to enact bans on cruising starting in the 1970s during the oil embargo. In 1974, Los Angeles started taking actions against cruising, banning parking on the San Fernando Valley’s Van Nuys Boulevard and turning the street into a one-way street. The following summer 15,000 people converged on Van Nuys Boulevard to protest the police actions.

In 1982, the California Legislature authorized cities to pass ordinances prohibiting cruising, declaring “the cruising of vehicles in business areas of cities and communities in this state for the purpose of socializing and assembling interferes with the conduct of business, wasted precious energy, resources, impedes the progress of general traffic and emergency vehicles, and promotes the generation of local concentrations of air pollution and undesirable noise levels.”

When Modesto enacted its cruising ban in the 1990s, the *Modesto Bee* editorial page protested, arguing that cruising was the cities’ claim to fame because of *American Graffiti*, and that “Generations of former young people remember cruising with nostalgia...Mainly, though, do we want police at blockades writing down license numbers and busting young people whose only crime is riding up and down?”

More recently, the lowrider community has been working with city officials to lift these bans. Efforts in San Jose to lift the ban are ongoing, while National City lifted its ban temporarily on May 6, 2022. Sacramento’s city council unanimously lifted their ban on May 31, 2022. An estimated 175 vehicles participated in an event celebrating the lifting of the ban, with cars meeting at Sweetwater high School where students held mariachi performances and a bake sale. No crime was reported as a result of the event.

According to the author, “This resolution recognizes the cultural significance of cruising across California, recognizes its contributions to society, including participating in COVID-19 vaccine drives and encouraging participation in the census. The resolution celebrates the history and culture of cruising, and encourages local officials and law enforcement to work with local car clubs to conduct safe cruising events. Unfortunately, in past decades, local governments have passed discriminatory ordinances that banned the practice of cruising. However, cities are now beginning to recognize that these ordinances are biased and have started to repeal those ordinances.

California currently allowed locals to outlaw cruising; however, we are seeing a resurgence of this activity in the past 10 years. ACR 176 allows us to recognize the history and culture of cursing and appreciate the virtuous work that car clubs do in their community.”

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

None on file

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** David Sforza / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093