Date of Hearing: March 20, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Laura Friedman, Chair
AB 1017 (Friedman) – As Introduced February 15, 2023

SUBJECT: Engineering and traffic surveys: equestrian safety

SUMMARY: Authorizes a local authority and the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to consider equestrian safety when conducting an engineering and traffic survey for the purposes of setting speed limits and makes technical clarifying amendments.

EXISTING LAW:

1) Authorizes the city of Norco to consider equestrian safety when conducting an engineering and traffic survey. (Vehicle Code Section (VEH) 22353).

2) Authorizes the cities of Long Angeles, Glendale, Burbank and the County of Orange within defined areas of their jurisdiction to consider equestrian safety when conducting an engineering and traffic survey. (VEH 22353.2, 22353.3, 22353.4, 22353.5).

3) Allows Caltrans and local authorities to adjust default speed limits based upon certain findings determined by an engineering and traffic survey. (VEH 22354 and 22358).

4) Requires an engineering and traffic survey to include prevailing speeds as determined by traffic engineering measurements, accident records; and highway, traffic, and roadside conditions not readily apparent to the driver (VEH 627).

5) Permits local authorities to additionally consider residential density, business density, and pedestrian and bicyclist safety with increased consideration for vulnerable pedestrian groups as defined. (VEH 627).

6) Requires a speed survey to be conducted every five, seven or 14 years on most streets in order to use radar enforcement to enforce speed limits (VEH 40802).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: In 2021, the California Legislature passed AB 43 (Friedman) Chapter 690, Statutes of 2021, which made various changes to how speed limits are set to give local governments and the state more flexibility to lower speed limits. Two of those changes included the ability to lower speed limits by five miles per hour (mph) on high injury streets, referred to as "safety corridors," and streets with a high concentration of bicyclists and pedestrians.

Prior to the passage of AB 43, speed limits were generally set using the prevailing speed, known as the 85th percentile, measured during a traffic survey by traffic engineers. Traffic surveys generally use the prevailing speed as the first basis for setting speed limits, but are allowed to deviate from the 85th percentile speed by rounding up or down to the nearest five mph increment. If the nearest five mph increment allowed for the speed limit to be rounded down, traffic engineers are permitted to lower the speed limit by an additional five mph for several reasons, including bicycle and pedestrian safety, high density, safety reasons that are not readily

apparent to the driver, accident records, and in some areas, equestrian safety (Vehicle Code 627). AB 43 gave additional direction for bicycle and pedestrian safety, asking traffic engineers to give increased consideration for vulnerable pedestrian groups including children, seniors, persons with disabilities, users of personal assistive mobility devices, and the unhoused. In recognition that lowering speed limits by five mph can have added safety benefits, AB 43 permitted cities to lower speed limits by an additional five mph increment if the street had a high concentration of bicyclist or pedestrians, or the street was determined to be one of the top 20% most dangerous streets within the cities jurisdiction (safety corridors).

Over the years the Legislature has authorized the cities of Norco, Los Angeles, Glendale, Burbank and the County of Orange to factor in equestrian safety when setting speed limits.

According to the author, "Cities facing issues related to equestrian safety should not have to individually come to the Legislature to seek approval to factor in equestrian safety when setting speed limits. Existing law unfairly leaves out rural areas that may have horses traversing their roads. AB 1017 fixes that by authorizing all local governments to factor in equestrian safety when setting speed limits."

Reducing speed limits has been shown to reduce both injuries and fatalities on the road. According to the University of California Institute of Traffic Studies, research has shown reducing speed limits on limited access roads by five mph can reduce injuries between 8% and 15%, with some studies finding reductions as great as 28% and 39%. A range of research also suggests lowering speed limits may result in the number of fatalities dropping by 10% to 30%, with one outlier study showing an 80% reduction in fatalities.

Previous Legislation:

AB 2955 (Friedman) Chapter 398, Statutes of 2018 allowed the city of Burbank within the boundaries of the Rancho Master Plan Area, the city of Glendale within the Horse Overlay Zone, and the city of Los Angeles within the Sylmar Community Plan and the Sunland-Tujunga-Lake View Terrace-Shadow Hills-East La Tuna Canyon Community Plan Areas, to additionally consider equestrian safety when conducting traffic surveys and setting speed limits.

AB 1669 (Wagner) Chapter 282, Statutes of 2014 allowed Orange County, within the common-interest development of Orange Park Acres, to also consider equestrian safety when conducting an engineering and traffic survey.

AB 2402 (Pacheco) Chapter 186, Statutes of 2002 allowed the City of Norco to also consider equestrian safety when conducting an engineering and traffic survey.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Opposition

None on file

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