

This bill:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of Transportation, on or before July 1, 2019, to establish and convene a “Vision Zero Task Force.”
- 2) Requires the task force to include, but not be limited to, representatives from the Department of the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the University of California (UC) and other academic institutions, local governments, bicycle safety organizations, road safety organizations, and labor organizations.
- 3) Requires the task force to develop a structured, coordinated process for early engagement of all parties to develop policies to reduce traffic fatalities to zero.
- 4) Requires the Secretary of Transportation to prepare and submit a report of findings based on the Vision Zero Task Force’s efforts to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature on or before January 1, 2020.
- 5) Requires the report to include, but not be limited to, a detailed analysis of the following issues:
 - a) The existing process for establishing speed limits, including a detailed discussion on where speed limits are allowed to deviate from the 85th percentile.
 - b) Existing policies on how to reduce speeds on local streets and roads.
 - c) A recommendation as to whether an alternative to the use of the 85th percentile as a method for determining speed limits should be considered, and if so, what alternatives should be looked at.
 - d) Engineering recommendations on how to increase vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle safety.
 - e) Additional steps that can be taken to eliminate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle fatalities on the road.
 - f) Existing reports and analyses on calculating the 85th percentile at the local, state, national, and international level.
 - g) Usage of the 85th percentile in urban and rural settings.
 - h) How local bicycle and pedestrian plans affect the 85th percentile.

6) Sunsets the bill's provisions on May 15, 2023.

COMMENTS

- 1) *Author's Statement.* Speed is the single greatest determining factor in the severity of crashes. Higher vehicle speeds correlate to the increased likelihood of a crash occurring and its severity. Cities like Los Angeles have adopted plans to eliminate traffic deaths and curtail dangerous speeding is fundamental to that strategy. Cities must have the tools and authority to set safe speeds.
- 2) *How it currently works.* In California and elsewhere, speed limits are generally set in accordance with ETSs which measure prevailing vehicle speeds and establish the limit at or near the 85th percentile (meaning the speed 15% of motorists exceed, based on road design and average conditions). California uses the 85th percentile rule to set speed limits except in cases where the limit is set in state law, such as the 25 mph limit on residential streets and in school zones, or where an ETS 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. Arbitrarily lowering a speed limit does not usually result in vehicles driving at a slower speed, but instead results in more drivers violating the law and being subject to traffic citations. This is because drivers tend to drive as fast as seems safe based on the width and geometry of the road, and other factors.
- 3) *Time to take a second look?* Setting speed limits at the 85th percentile has a long history in California and throughout the nation and there is a wealth of data to support its propriety. However, many local governments have long chafed at what they perceive to be the rigidity of its application. They contend that as motorists drive faster, speed limits are required to be adjusted upwards, creating a self-reinforcing loop. Whether or not this is true, the gathering of transportation professionals to study speed limit issues can only serve to re-examine longstanding assumptions and recommend new strategies as may be needed.
- 4) *What's in a name?* Some observers have noted that naming the entity "The Vision Zero Task Force" might tend to predispose it to look for ways to reduce speed limits in more instances than might otherwise be justified. Vision Zero is the name of an international movement that seeks to eliminate all traffic fatalities and particularly strives to protect pedestrians and bicyclists. One

suggestion offered to the Committee would be to rename it the Speed Limit Task Force, a title which would appear to be more viewpoint-neutral.

- 5) *Author's Amendments.* The author proposes to add Caltrans as a member of the task force as well as including statewide membership road safety organizations and transportation advocacy organizations.

ASSEMBLY VOTES:

Floor: 77-0
Transportation: 13-1

RELATED LEGISLATION:

AB 2955 (Friedman, 2017)— would allow the Cities of Burbank, Glendale and Los Angeles to consider equestrian safety when conducting an ETS within specified areas of those cities. *This bill passed out of the Senate Transportation & Housing Committee on June 12 and is currently on the Senate floor.*

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, June 6, 2018.)

SUPPORT:

California Bicycle Coalition
California Walks
City of Long Beach
City of Los Angeles
City of Sacramento
Los Feliz Neighborhood Council
Vision Zero Network

OPPOSITION:

Safer Streets L.A.