

Many of us necessarily are focused on our immediate towns and neighborhoods, regarding pedestrian safety & walkability.

It helps to occasionally pay attention to what is being considered by our state legislators. Asking your local state Assemblymember and your local state Senator what bills affecting traffic safety can be worthwhile.

Too often, legislators, their aides, agency staff, and the media look at traffic safety issues from the perspective of the vehicle operator. Period.

Here's two cases that exemplify the need to consistently pay careful attention:

1] SB 1303, by Sen. Simitian, from the Palo Alto area. It started out as a way to address some court decisions about a need to improve the quality of evidence needed for effective ticketing by cameras enforcing red-light violations. But, shortly before being vote don by the full Senate, it was amended --with a provision many consider nonsensical.

The initial amendment provided that a driver can avoid responsibility for a camera-based ticket by signing a statement providing various options for exemption --such as that the owner wasn't driving the car or had already sold it. Fair enough.

Somehow, a 3rd option was added: "None of the above". Nobody, but nobody, can figure out all the possibilities of that option.

Whether or not readers and advocates like or dislike camera enforcement, this last-minute amendment is sloppy drafting, misleading, and would make all sorts of tickets harder to enforce.

Yet, out of collegial courtesy, this amendment was ignored when the final vote happened in the Senate. It passed overwhelmingly, such that now there is a momentum to pass this in the Assembly.

The California Police Chiefs Association and others are fighting to UN-amend this part of SB 1303 -- at a tremendous cost in their time and energy.

2] AB 2128--by Cook of Southern California. This would make it less costly--and therefore easier --to roll through a stop sign or traffic light. It also would override the national standard on traffic signal timing for yellow lights.

It passed through the Assembly Transportation Committee UNANIMOUSLY.

And, the SB 1303 that passed the Senate is now also before the Assembly Transportation Committee.

Neither of these bills dealt in any way with the hazards to

pedestrians or bicyclists. That SB 1303 and AB 2128 could lead to an increase in collisions --and therefore to an increase in injuries, ambulance calls, ER visits, surgeries, hospitalizations, lost work, rehab. stays --is totally outside the thinking of our legislators and their staffs.

So, it may pay future safety dividends to occasionally ask your local state legislators to look into any and all traffic safety bills for their "impact" on pedestrians.

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