

C/CAG

CITY/COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

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September 13, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 43 (Friedman) Speed limits – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG), I write to respectfully request your signature on AB 43 (Friedman). AB 43 would provide local jurisdictions flexibility in setting speed limits lower than what is otherwise determined by the mechanistic methodology in state law, on roads designated as high-injury streets, in business activity districts, and near vulnerable populations such as senior centers.

C/CAG is a joint powers agency whose members comprise the County of San Mateo and the twenty incorporated cities and towns in San Mateo County. C/CAG works on issues of countywide significance, including reducing traffic congestion, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and advancing active transportation options through safe, efficient, and equitable infrastructure planning and implementation.

Every year, hundreds of Californians die in speed-related crashes. As the data from departments of transportation around the state and the country show, speed is a major contributor to fatalities and serious injuries in crashes, and it is well known that the faster people drive, the more dangerous and deadly our roads become, especially for the most vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors and children. A person struck by a vehicle going 20 mph has a 90% chance of surviving; but the survival rate plummets to 60% if the vehicle is going only 10 mph faster. The survival rate is only 20% if the vehicle is travelling at 40 mph.

Despite these facts, a decades-old and rigid approach to setting speeds – first developed for use on rural roads, now embedded in California law – makes it very hard for cities to set speed limits at speeds that reduce traffic fatalities. Reflecting the so-called “85th percentile” methodology, current law limits jurisdictions’ ability to set safe vehicle speed limits on the most dangerous streets. Traffic engineers calculate the 85th percentile speed for a given roadway during free-flowing traffic when conducting an engineering and traffic survey. The survey results are then analyzed, yielding the speed at or below which 85 percent of the drivers are traveling. Current law places parameters and limitations on setting speed limits that deviate from the 85th percentile. Existing law effectively sets speed limits based on drivers breaking the law, and importantly to note, there is no evidence to suggest any correlation between traffic flow at the 85th percentile and safety for all road users.

While recognizing the need for and playing a significant role in advancing mode-shifting, reducing vehicle miles traveled through active transportation options and supporting transit-oriented development in San Mateo County, C/CAG is committed to ensuring these sustainable transportation projects are centered on safety and equity. As neighborhoods in the county and throughout the region continue to face severe congestion on local roads, C/CAG's role in promoting healthy, safe, and environmentally sound transportation alternatives to foster safe roads for all users becomes increasingly salient.

The recently adopted 2021 C/CAG San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identified that the largest segment of the population does not feel comfortable riding a bicycle adjacent to high speed traffic and that approximately 25% of the roadways in San Mateo County are considered to have "high level of traffic stress" for bicyclists due to adjacent vehicle speeds.

AB 43 presents a much-needed opportunity to address the unacceptable consequences of outdated speed setting methods in communities throughout San Mateo County and beyond, and to make future transportation investments work for public safety and sustainable transportation goals.

C/CAG commends Assemblymember Friedman and the Legislature for taking action to ensure our streets and roads are safer for everyone, and for the reasons above, C/CAG respectfully requests your signature for AB 43.

Sincerely,



Marie Chuang, Chair

City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County