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AB-28 Bicycle safety: rear lights. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Bill No. 28

CHAPTER 549

An act to amend Section 21201 of the Vehicle Code, relating to bicycle safety.

[Approved by Governor October 07, 2015. Filed with Secretary of State October 07, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 28, Chu. Bicycle safety: rear lights.

Existing law requires that a bicycle operated during darkness upon a highway, a sidewalk where bicycle operation is not prohibited by the local jurisdiction, or a bikeway, as defined, be equipped with a red reflector on the rear that is visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of headlamps on a motor vehicle. A violation of this requirement is an infraction.

This bill would instead require that a bicycle operated under those circumstances be equipped with a red reflector or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector on the rear that is visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of headlamps on a motor vehicle. By revising the definition of a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would also include a statement of legislative findings and declarations.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The Governors Highway Safety Association's report entitled "Spotlight on Highway Safety: Bicyclist Safety" states that the greatest numbers of bicyclist deaths from 2010 to 2012, inclusive, occurred in high population states with many urban centers. In addition, according to the report, this state had the highest number of bicycle fatalities from 2010 to 2012, inclusive, at 338 deaths followed by Florida (329), Texas (143), New York (138), Illinois (80), and Michigan (72). These six states accounted for more than one-half (54 percent) of all bicyclist fatalities.

(b) In California, there were 123 bicyclist fatalities in 2012. These deaths had an impact on the family members of the bicyclists, as well as on the motor vehicle drivers involved in those accidents and the families of those motor vehicle drivers.

(c) Although there are many different approaches to reducing accidents resulting in injuries and fatalities to bicyclists, enhancing visibility is important, particularly in light of the fact that many collisions take place in periods of darkness. In 2012, 27 percent of bicyclist deaths in California occurred between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

SEC. 2. Section 21201 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21201. (a) No person shall operate a bicycle on a roadway unless it is equipped with a brake that will enable the operator to make one braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

(b) No person shall operate on the highway a bicycle equipped with handlebars so raised that the operator must elevate his or her hands above the level of his or her shoulders in order to grasp the normal steering grip area.

(c) No person shall operate upon a highway a bicycle that is of a size that prevents the operator from safely stopping the bicycle, supporting it in an upright position with at least one foot on the ground, and restarting it in a safe manner.

(d) A bicycle operated during darkness upon a highway, a sidewalk where bicycle operation is not prohibited by the local jurisdiction, or a bikeway, as defined in Section 890.4 of the Streets and Highways Code, shall be equipped with all of the following:

(1) A lamp emitting a white light that, while the bicycle is in motion, illuminates the highway, sidewalk, or bikeway in front of the bicyclist and is visible from a distance of 300 feet in front and from the sides of the bicycle.

(2) A red reflector or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector on the rear that shall be visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of headlamps on a motor vehicle.

(3) A white or yellow reflector on each pedal, shoe, or ankle visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from a distance of 200 feet.

(4) A white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle, and a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle, except that bicycles that are equipped with reflectorized tires on the front and the rear need not be equipped with these side reflectors.

The reflectors and reflectorized tires shall be of a type meeting requirements established by the department.

(e) A lamp or lamp combination, emitting a white light, attached to the operator and visible from a distance of 300 feet in front and from the sides of the bicycle, may be used in lieu of the lamp required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (d).

SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.