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Statement on Proposed Bike Yield "Idaho Stop" Legislation October, 2015

Overview

Pedestrian safety is a major concern of seniors and people with disabilities in San Francisco. Our communities sustain injuries not just from cars, but from bicycles as well. We support bicycling as a mode of transit that does not harm the environment, addresses traffic crowding, has many individual benefits, and can encourage community interaction. We believe strongly that we can and must create a set of laws and practices that are friendly to all pedestrians, including seniors and people with disabilities, *and* bicyclists (also including seniors and people with disabilities). For these reasons, we propose a series of changes to the Bike Yield legislation. If these changes are adopted, we will not oppose the legislation.

Cause for concern

In most transportation and pedestrian safety planning, heavy emphasis is placed on reducing traffic collisions and injuries, with a focus on collisions between vehicles and other road users. We agree with this emphasis, but we must also recognize that for older adults and people with disabilities, the perception of safety is critically important. Due to mobility, cognitive, and sensory limitations, people with disabilities can become aware of and react to changing conditions more slowly than other pedestrians, increasing the likelihood of injury. Seniors and people with disabilities can be injured more easily and take longer to recover. If a senior or a person with a disability does not feel like traffic or transit conditions allow them to safely move down the sidewalk, cross the street, and get to their destination, they may not go out at all. We at SDA are committed to creating an inclusive, aging and disability-friendly community, in which all residents are able to fully participate in and contribute to community life.

Proposed amendments

The proposed Bike Yield "Idaho Stop" legislation proposes that bicyclists must "slow to a safe speed" at a stop sign, and avoid constituting an "immediate hazard" if a pedestrian is in the intersection. SDA staff and members have experienced many collisions and near-collisions in which the cyclists claimed they were traveling safely. Similarly, even though there is a lack of reported data, people with disabilities and seniors experience minor injuries during collisions with bicyclists that often go unreported. We object to this language, as we believe "safe speed" is too subjective and makes it too easy for a bicyclist to go any speed and simply claim later that they *perceived* it to be safe. We propose defining "safe speed" as less than 6 miles per hour when approaching a stop sign. Rather than allowing a cyclist to determine subjectively whether there is an "immediate hazard," and leaving a pedestrian at their whim, we propose that the legislation require the bicyclist to stop "if any pedestrian is in the crosswalk or intersection upon approach."

Additional components

We propose that safe and successful implementation of the bike yield legislation must also include: 1) a pedestrian safety education program for cyclists, reminding cyclists to stop

when a pedestrian is present and to always slow to 6 miles per hour near an intersection, and 2) enforcement of bicycle laws in areas of high pedestrian and cyclist volume, including ticketing for violations such as running red lights on Market Street or stopping in a busy crosswalk at a stoplight.

Closing

In summary, we propose the following changes to the Bike Yield legislation, to ensure safety for seniors, people with disabilities, and all community members:

- 1) Define a “safe speed” for a cyclist approaching a stop sign as less than 6 miles per hour.
- 2) Replace “immediate hazard” with language requiring a stop if there are any pedestrians in the crosswalk or intersection.
- 3) Include pedestrian safety education.
- 4) Simultaneously enforce bicycle laws in areas of high pedestrian and bicycle volume.