



AB 1017 – Equestrian Safety: Speed Limits

Summary:

AB 1017 allows traffic engineers to use equestrian safety as a safety-related factor in order to set posted speed limits.

Background:

In 2002 the California Legislature granted the City of Norco to consider equestrian safety as one of the factors it may consider when determining appropriate speed limits. In 2014 that authority was extended to Orange County to set speed limits taking into account equestrian safety in the Orange Park Acres community interest development. In 2018 the Legislature again extended that authority to the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Los Angeles in certain neighborhoods that have a higher concentration of horses.

This patchwork approach requires jurisdictions that may be facing equestrian safety issues on public roads to approach the Legislature to ask for permission to factor equestrian safety when setting speed limits.

Permitting traffic engineers to take into account equestrian safety may permit them to lower speed limits by 5 miles per hour on streets where equestrian safety is a factor. This will enhance safety for equestrians and other vulnerable road users.

While changing speed limits has a minor overall effect on the mean speed, it has a major effect on reducing speed-related injuries and fatalities. The University of California Institute of Traffic Studies (UC ITS) notes that a five mph reduction in speed can reduce injuries by 8-15%. Other studies have reported reductions as great as 28% and 39%. The benefits may be even greater for pedestrians. UC ITS notes that research has shown that environments with five mph lower posted speed limits equate to 56-88% fewer serious pedestrian injuries and 80-96% fewer pedestrian fatalities.

AB 1017:

- Permits all jurisdictions traffic engineers to take into account equestrian safety when setting speed limits.

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