



December 14, 2015

London Breed
President, Board of Supervisors
City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

Bicycle Yield Enforcement Policy

Dear President Breed and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

Last week at the Land Use Committee, I spoke in opposition to the bike yield enforcement policy that will be heard at the full Board on Tuesday December 15th. I am writing today with the recommendation that you postpone this legislation and consider implementing instead a pilot program. A pilot could use innovative technology like advanced pedestrian interval signals; we could use a pilot to create a whole new language around traffic signs. A pilot could start with the neighborhood surrounding the Wiggle, where the controversy around enforcement began.

My concern is that we currently have inadequate data analyzing the impact of the bike yield measure on pedestrians with disabilities. When I speak about pedestrians with disabilities I include the entire community such as wheelchair users, who may be hard to see because of their low profile to the ground; people who use walkers and canes, who may move slowly and have difficulty reacting; and people who are blind, who are unable to see a bicyclist approach.

While promoting bicycle ridership and bicycle safety is this measure's goal, at last week's committee hearing you would have heard the other department speakers from Police, Health, and MTA who articulated their concerns that this legislation could be in direct conflict with Vision Zero, which was a data driven approach that proposed engineering, enforcement, and education efforts to improve safety for all road users.

While I appreciate Supervisor Avalos' amendments setting a maximum speed limit when pedestrians are present in an intersection, and setting a minimum radius or clear space around pedestrians, I believe that the measure as written relies too much upon subjective decision making by the bicyclists about what is safe for pedestrians. The current rules and regulations are very clear. And yet, pedestrians with disabilities experience conflict with bicyclists at stop controlled intersections every day.

I will concede that the bicyclists who ignore traffic laws now and put pedestrians and themselves at risk may be a minority, and when they exhibit unsafe behavior we should prioritize our enforcement and issue citations to the worst offenders. But as a lifelong bicyclist in San Francisco with 38 years of riding experience I also have concerns that this legislation could make bicycling more dangerous if it is implemented without investing in engineering changes and a new language for traffic signage. I speak from experience. In 2001 I was hit by a car in a bike lane while crossing an intersection on a green light. I suffered a traumatic brain injury in that accident from which I never fully recovered. Today, when I approach an intersection on my bike, I do not rely solely upon traffic safety laws to protect me. I assume it is not safe to cross until I have verified the intersection is clear of bicycles, motor vehicles and pedestrians.

In closing, I urge you to reconsider passing City-wide legislation and recommend instead that you only approve a pilot program. A pilot program would allow the City to experiment with innovative engineering and robust education while we collect the data we need to evaluate the change to traffic safety rules. A pilot program overseen by the Vision Zero Task Force would foster collaboration and bring all of the stake holders together in our efforts to promote safety for all road users.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carla Johnson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Carla Johnson, CBO, CASp
Director

Cc: Jean Fraser, Bicycle Coalition