DATE: August 31, 2022

AGENDA ITEM # 3

TO: Complete Streets Commission

FROM: Marisa Lee, Transportation Services Manager

SUBJECT: California Assembly Bill (AB) 43 – Traffic Safety

ATTACHMENTS: None

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive update on AB 43.

INTRODUCTION

Assembly Bill (AB) 43 – Traffic Safety changes the process by which Engineering & Traffic Surveys (speed surveys) are prepared by allowing local agencies to establish "Safety Corridors" with policy-directed speed limits that take into consideration vulnerable pedestrian groups in addition to the traditional 85th percentile calculation process based on prevailing speeds and road conditions. The bill also introduces the ability to establish permanent 15- and 20-MPH speed limits on roads that are historically were only implemented as part of special speed zone segments along school routes or senior center areas. AB 43 requires these changes to take affect by June 30, 2024 pending updates to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and California – Manual on Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

While the CVC and CA-MUTCD updates are being finalized, many local agencies are preparing policy approval documents that identify streets where adjusted speed limits should be considered. Staff recommends as part of this discussion topic that the Complete Streets Commission consider development of a subcommittee that is tasked with working with staff to identify street zone segments within the City where reduced speed zone segments should be considered for City Council approval.

BACKGROUND

The California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 43 – Traffic Safety in September 2021, the bill was introduced by Assemblymember Laura Friedman from the 43rd Assembly District in Southern California. The Bill modifies the method used establish speed zone segments from an 85th percentile engineering analysis method to a policy approval process that considers pedestrian safety over motorist driving behavior on business or residence districts. The use of the 85th percentile engineering analysis methods is still

required for use when evaluating speed zone segments but the 85th percentile calculation will not be the predominant factor in establishing speed limit recommendations, heavily weighted factors will include, "Safety of Bicyclists and Pedestrians, with an increased consideration for vulnerable pedestrian groups including children, seniors, persons with disabilities, users of personal assistive mobility devices, and the unhoused" allowing for posted speed limits to be below the 85th percentile recommended speeds.

DISCUSSION

AB-43 introduces the following changes to the CVC and CA-MUTCD modifying the approach towards the establishment of speed zone segments.

1) Vulnerable Pedestrian Groups

   - AB43 authorizes local authorities to consider the safety of vulnerable pedestrian groups (children, seniors, persons with disabilities, users of personal assistive mobility devices, and the unhouse) as a factor in Engineering & Traffic Surveys.

2) 25 MPH Prime Face Definition

   - Existing law establishes a prima facie speed limit of 25 miles per hour in any business or residence district. Residential streets are defined in the CVC as streets 40-FT in width or less, have no more than two lanes, and be predominantly residential use.

   - AB43 expands the definition of business and residential districts to eliminate the current CVC definition with preference towards policy definition (i.e., General Plan definition).

3) 15- and 20-MPH Speed Zone Segments

   - Existing law allows streets to be posted at 5-MPH increments between 25- and 65 MPH.

   - AB43 allows speed zone segments to be signed at 5-MPH increments between 15- and 65-MPH.

4) Special Lower Speed Zone Districts adjacent to Business Districts

   - Existing law allows for special speed zone districts of 15- and 20-MPH for school routes without the need for an Engineering & Traffic Survey.

- AB43 allows for lower posted speeds (15- and 20-MPH) on streets contiguous to a business activity district, following a 30-day warning period. This would allow for lower speeds along N San Antonio Rd adjacent to Downtown.

5) 85th Percentile Engineering Traffic & Survey Posted Speeds

- Existing law requires that speed limits be set no lower than 5-MPH below the nearest 5-MPH speed calculated from the 85th percentile of a roadway. For example, if the 85th percentile speed of a street is calculated at 38-MPH. The rounded 85th percentile speed would be 40-MPH. Following an engineering & traffic survey the posted speed limit should be set no lower than 35-MPH.

- AB43 allows further 5-MPH increment reductions below past calculated speed zones taking into consideration vulnerable pedestrian groups as a heavily weighted factor when recommending speed zones. A 30-day warning period is required prior to issuance of citations when lower speed limits.

- AB43 introduces the concept of "Safety Corridors" that have recommended speed limits significantly below traditional 85-th percentile calculation practices. Safety Corridor implementation as defined by AB43 is not allowed to be implemented before June 30, 2024 to allow the CVC and CA-MUTCD to be updated by State officials.

6) Speed Traps

- Existing law defines a roadway as a speed trap if a speed limit is posted without a valid engineering & traffic survey and limits enforcement through radar when posted speed limits are not consistent with engineering & traffic survey practices.
- Existing law limits the life of an engineering & traffic survey to a maximum of 10-years (7-year normal life plus a one-time 3-year extension based on an evaluation from a registered engineer).

- AB43 allows for existing engineering & traffic surveys to a maximum of 14-years (7-year normal life plus a one-time 7-year extension based on an evaluation from a registered engineer).

RECOMMENDATION:

Prepare for future discussions by beginning to brainstorm corridors that would make good candidates for potential Safety Corridors within the City of Los Altos to establish new speed zone segment recommendations based on the allowances of AB43.