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Minnesota State Senate Transportation Committee
Attn: Beth Ethier, Committee Administrator
Minnesota Senate Building
Room 1100
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 4, 2024

Dear Senators:

Subject: Written testimony in support of SF 3993

I will provide testimony on two elements of The Bill: the 15mph standard for school Zones; and, upgrading Minnesota's Driver Education Manual and driver exam that speaks to those who walk, cycle, and 'roll.'

All-time School Speed Zones

Reducing motor vehicle traffic speeds to 15 mph during the school day and when students are dropped-off and picked-up might seem adequate. However, schools are often 'in session' at other times during a day for such things as concerts, parent/teacher conferences, and convocations of one type or another. Many of these might occur during low-ambient light making pedestrian access to school buildings more treacherous than during daylight hours.

A standard, 'all-time' 15 mph zone will create, for a motor vehicle operator a mindful habit that a school zone speed limit will always be 15 mph, irrespective of the day or time of day. The perceived inconvenience of dropping one's speed from, say, 30 mph to 15 mph is minimal and could be tantamount to keeping children and others safe while they enter or depart school property.

Speed zones such as this are not unlike what The State already has in place. For instance, the speed limit for vehicles in alleys is 10 mph - Statewide. A parallel example is that anyone operating a motor bike or motorcycle must wear approved eye protection. Another is that all children up to a certain age and size must be seated and belted in an approved car seat. There is little if any argument with the latter two examples of public safety for motor vehicles. Upon compliance, most drivers incorporate driving rules and regulations as a matter of personal responsibility, helping to ensure their own safety, that of their passengers, for people in other vehicles, and for pedestrians.

Mandatory Driver Education Highlighting Walking, Cycling, and Rollerblading

While driver education for Minnesotans provides for comprehensive training as to the operation of motor vehicles, there is a divide in the training of people who utilize non-motorized means of travel on public streets and roads. Frankly, some of those who “walk, bike, and roll” are not cognizant of the laws that apply to them, from the aspect of safety and from the legal perspective.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Driver’s Manual does speak to the use of public streets and roadways by cyclists, walkers, joggers, and rollerbladers (rollers), who are extremely vulnerable when sharing common infrastructure with motor vehicles. I’d like to highlight two examples that I believe need reinforcement:

1. Cyclists are legally allowed to be in spaces that are occupied by motor vehicles, including turn lanes; and 2. Cyclists who are using a pedestrian crosswalk, say to cross a busy intersection, must dismount from their bicycle and walk the bicycle across to the other side. BikeMN has courses available to instruct cyclists on the legal aspects as well as the safety considerations that are always in play when one uses a bicycle on a public street or roadway. Joggers and rollerbladers must follow the rules that apply to pedestrians.

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of SF 3993.

Yours very truly,

Peter W. Connor
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