

RESOLUTION NO. .

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE LEGISLATURE TO TAKE ACTION TO PROMOTE TRAFFIC SAFETY BY PROHIBITING USE OF CELL PHONES WHILE CROSSING STREETS, OR, ALTERNATIVELY, GIVING EXPRESS AUTHORITY TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS TO REGULATE THE ISSUE

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State of California, that

WHEREAS, increased use of cell phones since the year 2000 has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in pedestrian injuries due to cell phone-related distracted walking; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2015 report by the National Safety Council (NSC), distracted walking incidents involving cell phones accounted for more than 11,100 injuries between 2000 and 2011; and

WHEREAS, the NSC notes that it is “just as important to walk cell free as it is to drive cell free,” because “pedestrians and drivers using cell phones are both impaired and too mentally distracted to fully focus on their surroundings”; and

WHEREAS, a recent study out of the Ohio State University found that an estimated 1500 pedestrians were treated in emergency rooms in 2010 for injuries due to cell phone-related distracted walking, which was double the reported level in 2005, despite an overall decrease in the level of pedestrian injuries arising from all causes; and

WHEREAS, this study further found that distracted walking injuries are most prevalent among those of ages 16 to 25 years old; and

WHEREAS, some jurisdictions have begun to legislate in the area of cell phone-related distracted walking, including the City of Honolulu which passed an ordinance that will go into effect October 2017, forbidding pedestrians from crossing a street or highway while viewing a mobile electronic device; and

WHEREAS, here in California, as elsewhere, there is an important need for such legislation; and

WHEREAS, while traffic safety can often be a local concern that might be addressed on a street-by-street basis, the Legislature has generally indicated that issues of traffic safety should be regulated statewide; and

WHEREAS, the California Vehicle Code Section 21950(b) currently recognizes that each pedestrian has a “duty of using due care for his or her safety” while crossing roadways, but, as the statistics show, the safety of pedestrians continues to be compromised by use of mobile electronic devices while crossing the street.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors urges the state legislature to take action to promote traffic safety by prohibiting use of cell phones while crossing streets or, alternatively, giving express authority to local jurisdictions to regulate the issue.

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