

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: February 26, 2016

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations, and Neighborhoods Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Sharon M. Tso* Council File No.: 16-0148
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No.: 16-02-0149

SUBJECT: Pedestrian Countdown Signals.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached revised Resolution to include in the City's 2015-16 State Legislative Program SPONSORSHIP/SUPPORT for legislation to revise California Vehicle Code Section (CVC) 21456(b) to update pedestrian laws to include new and safe guidelines for pedestrian countdown signals at crosswalks.

SUMMARY

On February 5, 2016, Resolution (Huizar-Bonin) was introduced that recommends and supports new State legislation to update pedestrian laws to include new and safe guidelines for countdown signal crosswalks.

Pedestrian countdown signals are designed to enhance the effectiveness of notifying individuals before a signal changes direction. Providing a pedestrian countdown device helps a person better understand how much time is available to cross the street and also enables pedestrians to stop on a median refuge, where provided, and wait for the next phase if they find the time left to be too short to finish crossing. Pedestrian countdown signals in San Francisco have been shown to have a 25% reduction in pedestrian injury collisions.

CVC Section 21456(b), also known as the "jaywalking law," governs when a pedestrian may cross the street at a controlled intersection. This section states that a pedestrian who begins to cross against a flashing or steady "Don't Walk" or "Upraised Hand" symbol is in violation and subject to a citation. Most pedestrians, however, are unaware that it is illegal to enter the crosswalk during the countdown phase. When CVC Section 21456(b) was enacted in 1981, countdown signals did not exist. Unfortunately, state law has not been amended to clarify the meaning of (and compliance for) when a pedestrian may cross at a controlled intersection with countdown displays. As a result, there is much confusion about when a pedestrian is permitted to cross.

BACKGROUND

The Council has considered numerous motions relative to policies on pedestrian signals in general and pedestrian signal improvement projects at specific intersection locations, including:

October 22, 1999 - Motion (Feuer-Svorinich, Jr.) (C.F. 99-2042) that directed LADOT, the Departments of Disability and Aging to report on the feasibility, cost, and timeline for installing audible pedestrian signals at intersections frequented by seniors.

September 10, 2002 - Motion (Garcetti-Bernson) (C.F. 02-1966) that directs the Department of

Transportation to analyze pedestrian danger zones and report with recommendations to enhance the level of service for pedestrians in these areas and to consider pedestrian safety tools for pilot testing at these intersections, even if their use may have flow impacts on automotive traffic.

August 16, 2005 - Motion (Greuel-Smith) (C.F. 05-1750) that directs the Department of Transportation to report on the Department's pedestrian safety efforts including, pedestrian signs, smart crosswalks, high-visibility crosswalk treatments, automated pedestrian detection devices, pedestrian countdown signals, illuminated pedestrian push buttons and any other innovative technology; available funding sources and the Department's policy relative to prioritizing the construction of pedestrian safety measures across the City.

April 5, 2006 - Motion (Greuel-LaBonge) (C.F. 06-0762) that directed the Department of Transportation to report on how it determines signal timing for pedestrians, and how signals accommodate slower moving pedestrians, particularly in areas with high concentrations of elderly pedestrians.

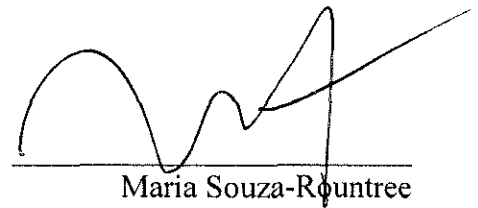
January 10, 2007 - Motion (Greuel-LaBonge) (C.F. 07-0053) that directs the Department of Transportation to report on various pedestrian safety improvements, particularly to improve the safety of students, and the City's compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

September 17, 2008 - Motion (Rosendahl-Greuel) (C.F. 08-2485) that directed the Department of Transportation to report on the feasibility of installing audible crosswalk notification systems to our City crosswalks that would assist the visually impaired.

May 4, 2014 - Motion (Bonin-Huizar) (C.F. 15-0546) that directed the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Department of Transportation to report on the enforcement of crosswalk intersection pedestrian signals and how enforcement actions complement or conflict with LADOT's "Vision Zero" Strategic Plan. In response to this motion, the LAPD and LADOT provided several extensive written and verbal reports to the Transportation Committee. As part of these reports, staff provided the following summary of several policy changes enacted by cities and states across the nation to address the actual use of the new pedestrian countdown displays:

- In early 2000, Salt Lake City, Utah, passed a countdown signal ordinance to allow the pedestrian to enter the crosswalk during the flashing "Upraised Hand" interval in conjunction with time remaining on the countdown clock "only if such pedestrian is able to safely walk completely across the street or to a safety island before the signal shows no remaining time." A local ordinance would not be possible in California because it violates provisions of the CVC.
- Similarly, in 2009 the Texas Department of Transportation amended the Texas MUTCD with a new meaning of flashing upraised hand when pedestrian countdown displays are present. Specifically, pedestrians may enter the intersection on the flashing upraised hand when a countdown display is present if they are able to travel to the far side of the traveled way by the time conflicting traffic receives a green signal.

- In 2012, Indiana amended their state code to state that if a countdown pedestrian signal indication is also shown with a flashing "Don't Walk," a pedestrian may cross if the pedestrian is able to proceed to the sidewalk or safety island by the time the steady "Don't Walk" signal is shown, and a person who drives a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way to the pedestrian.
- In 2015, South Carolina amended their Code of Laws such that "for pedestrian crosswalks equipped with countdown indicators, a pedestrian may cross if he can complete the crossing during the remaining time shown."



Maria Souza-Rountree
Analyst

Attachment:
1. Revised Resolution

SMT:msr

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, pedestrian signals are devices used at signalized intersections to notify pedestrians when it is safe to cross the street; and

WHEREAS, modern pedestrian signals include countdown timers that display the number of seconds remaining before the signal changes to "Don't Walk;" and

WHEREAS, California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 21456(b), enacted in 1981, states that a pedestrian who begins to cross against a flashing or steady "Don't Walk" or "Upraised Hand" symbol is in violation and is subject to a citation; and

WHEREAS, CVC Section 21456(b) has not been amended to clarify when a pedestrian may cross at a controlled intersection with countdown displays;

WHEREAS, in 2008, the City of Los Angeles began widespread use of countdown signals as part of a pedestrian safety initiative to provide clear guidance on the amount of time an individual has to safely cross a street; and

WHEREAS, the City is emphasizing pedestrian and multi-modal transportation infrastructure to encourage more people to walk through complete street strategies, including pedestrian priority phasing, road diets, parklets, and pedestrian plazas; and

WHEREAS, promoting walkability and pedestrian safety is a key component of the City's Mobility Plan 2035; and

WHEREAS, as the City expands the number of pedestrian countdown signals, it is necessary to clarify when a pedestrian is permitted to cross an intersection;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2015-2016 State Legislative Program SPONSORSHIP/SUPPORT for legislation to revise California Vehicle Code Section 21456 to update pedestrian laws to include new and safe guidelines for pedestrian countdown signals at crosswalks.