

Date of Hearing: April 28, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Bonnie Lowenthal, Chair

AB 2707 (Chau) – As Amended: April 21, 2014

SUBJECT: Vehicles: length limitations: buses: bicycle transportation devices.

SUMMARY: Authorizes transit buses of no more than 40 feet in length to be equipped with a front-mounted bicycle rack that extends up to 40 inches from the front body of the bus when fully deployed rather than the 36 inches allowed under current law, and limits the handlebars of a bicycle that is being transported on such a rack from extending more than 46 inches from the front of the bus rather than the 42 inches under current law.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Generally limits the length of a bus to 45 feet. A public transit operator may equip its buses of any length with bike racks that extend up to 36 inches out from the front of its buses and that may be loaded such that the bike handlebars extend up to 42 inches in front of the bus. In no case can the total length of the bus, the bike rack, and bikes be greater than 48.5 feet.
- 2) Requires a transit agency to establish a route review committee if it wants to operate 45-foot buses with front-mounted bike racks. The route review committee must conduct a field review of routes where the buses would travel and consult traffic engineers from the public agencies with jurisdiction over the roads that the bus routes follow. Only when a route review committee determines by unanimous vote that 45-foot buses with front bike racks can operate safely on the selected routes may the public transit agency then operate such buses on those routes. The route review committee must be comprised of:
  - a) A representative of the transit agency appointed by the general manager of that agency;
  - b) A traffic engineer from the public agency that has jurisdiction over the largest proportion of the transit agency's bus routes; and,
  - c) A representative of the bus drivers chosen by the labor organization representing the bus drivers.
- 3) Authorizes the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), the Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT), and Gold Coast Transit to install 40-inch bike racks on the front of their buses, with approval needed from a route review committee for installation on 45-foot buses. All three transit districts must report back to the Legislature about any incidents related to the larger racks and mobility improvements related to the racks, AC Transit by the end of 2014, Gold Coast by the end of 2017, and SacRT by the end of 2018.

FISCAL EFFECT: None

COMMENTS:

In recent years, transit agencies around the state have seen increased ridership from bicyclists who wish to use transit for some portion of their trip. Current law authorizes transit buses to be equipped with front-mounted bicycle racks, but limits them to extending 36 inches from the front body of the bus when fully deployed. Bike racks meeting the 36-inch limit are typically only large enough to accommodate two bikes.

In 2009, AC Transit sponsored successful legislation to allow the district to install 40-inch front-mounted bike racks, large enough to accommodate three bikes, to address growing demand. The legislation required the district to establish a route review committee before installing any of the longer racks on 45-foot buses, but required no route review for installation on shorter buses. The legislation required AC Transit to report back to the Legislature by the end of this year on any incidents where the size of the bike racks was a factor and on the mobility improvements that the racks provide. Since the bill was enacted, the district has installed 40-inch bike racks on about 50 of its 40-foot buses. Although it has not yet submitted its report to the Legislature, the district indicates that the longer racks have not been a safety issue and have been helpful in accommodating its growing ridership.

Subsequent to the AC Transit legislation, the Legislature gave similar authority to install 40-inch bike racks to two additional transit agencies: Gold Coast Transit in Ventura County and Sac RT. Last spring, Gold Coast installed three larger bike racks on its buses, all of which are 40 feet long or less. It is required to report back to the Legislature by the end of 2017 on any incidents where the size of the bike racks was a factor and on mobility improvements related to the racks. SacRT has not yet installed any of the longer bike racks but will be doing so soon and plans to install them only on 40-foot buses. SacRT is required to report back to the Legislature about any incidents and mobility improvements by the end of 2018.

AB 2707 authorizes the installation of 40-inch front-mounted bike racks on any transit bus that is no more than 40 feet in length. Given the growing number of transit agencies, including the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit District (Metro) and the North County District, that are seeking to install longer racks to accommodate growing demand from bicyclists and evidence from AC Transit that the racks have not been a safety issue on 40-foot buses, the author believes it makes sense to provide statewide authorization rather than having each transit agency pursue its own special legislation. The bill does not address buses longer than 40 feet. If a transit agency wanted to pursue installing bike racks longer than 36 inches on a 45-foot bus, it would still need to seek special legislation.

Arguments in support: According to the sponsor, Metro, ridership on public buses for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) increased from 360 million to 363 million trips between 2012 and 2013. Moreover, transit riders are increasingly using bicycles to access transit and the use of a bike rack that can accommodate three bicycles is necessary to accommodate that growth.

Arguments in opposition: The United Transportation Union, which represents Metro's drivers, argues that to extend the current 36 inch limitation for a front-mounted bike rack would jeopardize public safety and decrease traffic safety, especially given the already chaotic traffic conditions in the greater Los Angeles basin.

Related legislation: AB 1684 (Chávez) authorizes the North County Transit District to install bike racks on its buses that extend 43 inches from the front body of the bus, with a route review committee required for installation on any buses exceeding 40 feet in length.

Previous legislation: AB 652 (Skinner), Chapter 369, Statutes of 2009, gave AC Transit authority to install 40-inch bike racks on its buses, but only pursuant to a vote of a route review committee on any 45-foot buses.

AB 2488 (Williams), Chapter 376, Statutes of 2012, gave the same authority to Gold Coast Transit in Ventura County.

AB 206 (Dickinson), Chapter 95, Statutes of 2013 gave the same authority to SacRT.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (sponsor)

Opposition

United Transportation Union

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