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Roadshow: Bike helmets, lights to be given away in San Jose

By **Gary Richards**
Mercury News

Posted: 12/09/2008 07:38:48 PM PST

Q I'm all for bicyclists, but at night as a driver I get fleeting glimpses of folks on bikes with no lights of any kind. What's the law?

Robert Sward

Santa Cruz

A State law requires bikes at night to have all these lights — a white light on the front, a red reflector on the rear, white or yellow reflectors on the pedals, feet or ankles, and white or yellow reflectors on both sides, front and back of the bike. The front and rear lights are considered the most important and most neglected.

On Tuesday, San Jose will give away 150 bike helmets and 120 sets of front and rear lights from 5 to 7 p.m. outside the Martin Luther King Library at 4th and San Fernando streets. You must bring your bike, and volunteers will install the lights. And on Monday, the city will hold a public workshop from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in room 118-119 at City Hall on its bike master plan. Go to www.sanjoseca.gov/transportation/bikeped/bikeped_update.asp for more information.

Q What's going on with the metering lights at the ramp from Highway 87 onto 101? They have been off for the last few days. Please tell me this isn't permanent. I'm a carpooler, and I like the carpool metering light! Now if only they had built a carpool-to-carpool flyover, I'd be in heaven.

class="lettername">Mary Beth Kossuth

San Jose

A Heaven is not in the picture, but the metering light should be back on soon. A power glitch turned off the signal.

Q Now that Caltrans has removed the 45 mph signs for construction on Highway 84 through Pigeon Pass, there's a definite problem. Going eastbound, the speed limit is 50 mph, while directly opposite that sign going westbound the sign says 55 mph. Which is it — 50 or 55?

Barbara Mayes

Fremont

A Caltrans says the speed limit at Pigeon Pass is 50 mph in both directions, then it jumps to 55 from west of there to Interstate 680. At the south end of Pigeon Pass, the limit is 50 mph for traffic climbing the pass. This is the way it was before construction began. The state may do a speed survey on the new alignment to determine the appropriate speed for this segment of 84.

Q There was one light that always worked very well — until someone started working in the median at El Monte and Stonebrook roads, between the entrance to Foothill College and I-280. Since then, the light has turned stupid. Is this temporary?

Dan Katzenberg

A It's temporary. Crews working in the median cut a loop detector. It will be repaired when work is completed.

Q I believe my teenage daughter was wronged recently. Sara is 16 and has had her license for 10 months. Last week she received a ticket with two citations from a West Valley College police officer. The first was for not stopping at a stop sign when exiting from a parking lot to turn right onto the West Valley perimeter road. She was also cited for having a minor in the car even though she had a note from her mom (me) giving permission. She was doing me a huge favor by driving her younger sister to water polo practice after school when I was at work, and I thought that driving a sibling was OK. When I went to the pool to pick up her sister I followed the same route from the parking lot and there was no stop sign. What do you think? Should we fight these tickets? I need Sara to drive her sister to and from school and to water polo practice twice a week but don't want to hurt her driving record.

Sara's mom

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Saratoga

A Yes, these are worth fighting. First, according to Roadshow's traffic experts, this turn should be treated as a yield situation if there is no stop sign. She was cited under section 22450, which pertains to situations where a stop sign is posted. When there are no stop signs, as is the case here, you should be prepared to stop but can proceed if it's safe to do so. Second, it is legal for new teen drivers under the age of 18 to transport siblings to and from school if they have a note from their parents giving them permission. They cannot drive other teens for up to a year unless there is a licensed driver 25 or older in the vehicle.

Contact Gary Richards at mrroadshow@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5335.

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