

Draft Proposed PSAC Resolution – Distracted Walking

PSAC resolution urging the Board of Supervisors to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted by pedestrians while using any mobile electronic device while crossing streets.

WHEREAS, the rise in cell phone distracted walking injuries parallels the eight-fold increase in cell phone use in the last 15 years (National Safety Council 2015), and

WHEREAS, the Governors Highway Safety Association 2017 report finds that both drivers and pedestrians who are distracted by smartphones are less likely to be aware of their surroundings; and

WHEREAS, Pedestrians and drivers using cell phones are both impaired and too mentally distracted to fully focus on their surroundings (National Safety Council 2015); and

WHEREAS, a Stony Brook University study in 2011 documented the effect of texting on navigation while walking and found it significantly more dangerous than talking on a cell phone; and

WHEREAS, one in 10 pedestrian injuries is now related to distracted walking and that distracted walking causes more accidents than distracted driving, even if the severity of injuries is lower (University of Buffalo 2014); and

WHEREAS, A professor at William Paterson University conducted a study of more than 21,000 pedestrians at five of the most dangerous intersections in Manhattan and found that nearly half of pedestrians crossing on a “DON’T WALK” signal and about one-third crossing on a “WALK” signal were distracted while wearing headphones, talking and/or looking down at an electronic device (Journal of Community Health 2015); and

WHEREAS, Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, who has acknowledged that distracted walking is a factor in increased pedestrian deaths and injuries, has awarded grants totaling \$1.6 million to Louisville, New York City and Philadelphia for safety programs, noting that, “We’ve got to encourage people to have an awareness that this problem is a real problem” (Pew Charitable Trust Stateline, Dec. 11, 2014); and

WHEREAS, Jurisdictions as varied as City of Honolulu, the State of Utah, Fort Lee, New Jersey, Chicago, New York City, Ontario, Canada, and Pennsylvania have either passed laws, or are contemplating to, pertaining to pedestrian distracted walking in crossways; and

WHEREAS, New York State has recognized the problem of distracted walking and has passed legislation which "Directs the department of transportation of the city of New

York to study and report on its efforts to educate pedestrians and drivers on the dangers of pedestrians being distracted by use of a mobile device" (Sept. 3, 2017); and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization has recognizes that distracted walking is a growing and serious concern (Make Walking Safe: a brief overview of Pedestrian Safety (WHO/NMH/VIP 13.02)); thus be it

RESOLVED that

PSAC urges the Board of Supervisors to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted walking by pedestrians using any mobile electronic device while crossing streets.