

MINI MOTORCYCLES (POCKET BIKE) MOTION

In response to concerns relating to the increased operation of mini-motorcycles (pocket bikes) on California's streets and highways, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) has launched enforcement guidelines with the intent to enhance public safety on all roadways and to obtain compliance with the California Vehicle Code.

The CHP, in consultation with the Department of Motor Vehicles, has determined that mini-motorcycles are classified as *motor-driven cycles* and are regulated under the California Vehicle Code. According to the CHP, pocket bikes are not manufactured with a vehicle identification number indicating that the manufacturers intended they be operated on private property and not for use on city streets.

The CHP indicates that because the mini-motorcycle is a gasoline-powered *motor-driven cycle* subject to Section 405 VC, it is subject to all vehicle equipment, registration, driver license and helmet requirements stated in the VC. The same rules apply to electric-powered mini bikes which are regulated by Section 406 VC.

The LA Times reports that these small-scale motorcycles are so small they can be carried under one arm. They can reach 70 mph and they can be purchased for as cheap \$200 at a flea market. Pocket bikes are popular among all age groups. They are 16 to 20 inches tall. They are typically powered by a two-stroke lawnmower type engine, have a pull-cord starter and weigh between 35 to 60 pounds. Some are battery-operated. To ride, the driver must be contorted in a squatting position only inches above the pavement. Eye level of the rider will usually meet the bumper of oncoming cars. According to news reports, pocket bikes are usually sold without the required safety features, including brake lights, red rear reflectors, mirrors, turn signals, a horn or approved tires.

According to law enforcement officials pocket bikes often go through residential neighborhoods making excessive noise, endanger pedestrians on sidewalks, go in and out of traffic and are difficult for motorist to see. Officers are seeing an increasing number of pocket bikes throughout the state. In Baldwin Park, a 14-year suffered moderate to major injuries when he failed to stop at an intersection and ran in front of a passing vehicle.

The CHP believes that although there is no estimate of the number of mini-motorcycles in California or how many accidents have involved mini-motorcycles, the proliferation of these miniature bikes may bloom into a statewide threat to public safety.

I THEREFORE MOVE, that City Council instruct the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) with cooperation of the City Attorney and the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) to report to the Public Safety Committee within 45 days on the steps necessary to bring mini-motorcycles into compliance with appropriate City, County and State license codes and to provide basic law and safety information to operators of mini-motorcycles.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Attorney, CLA and LAPD pay particular attention to the growing number of personal motorized transportation devices on our streets of all types including, but not limited to, electric scooters, gasoline powered mini-bikes and electric Segway® type units, to determine if a separate and distinctive section of the Los Angeles Municipal Code needs to be created.

Presented by Councilman Dennis P. Zine, 3rd District and seconded by Greig Smith, 12th District on June 23, 2004.