

Scott Johnson's Distracted Driving Recommendations

A) Prohibit the use of a mobile communication device while a vehicle is stopped at a traffic light, a stop sign, in traffic or any other time when the vehicle is in a travel lane, but not in motion other than in an emergency situation.

Scott's note: This idea was recommended unanimously by the 2014 COA Distracted Driving Study Group, but was taken out by the former Austin City Council in 2014. This recommendation is not intended to apply to a cyclist who is temporarily stopped in a bicycle lane or in a cycle track lane.

Justification for this recommendation:

Based on my research the other app. 44 Texas cities who have adopted a hands-free ordinance allow for enforcement while the vehicle is temporarily stopped in a travel lane. Exemptions built into the Austin ordinance allow for phone use in emergency situations by public safety employees and the public.

B) Prohibit the use of music headphones that cover all or most of the entire diameter of the ear or greater while operating a motor vehicle and are not designed for 2-way communication. Ear buds would be allowed.

Justification for this recommendation:

Listening to music through headphones that cover most or all of the ear create an auditory distraction that competes with the driver's attention. These type of headphones are simply for listening to music and some of them are noise canceling meaning that the sound of a siren on a public safety vehicle is much more difficult to hear. Only headphones that allow 2-way communication and that can be operated hands-free should be allowed.

C) Prohibit the sharing of a video image or still image or the recording of a video image or the taking of a photograph with a mobile communication device or other electronic device by a vehicle passenger while a motor vehicle is in a travel lane.

Justification for this recommendation:

It is very common to share videos among friends by holding a smart phone in front of the other person's eyes to get a reaction. Some games such as "Pokémon Go" require a site map to find these virtual creatures. When the driver focuses on the smart phone to use as a guide or for enjoyment this can create a significant distraction that can put pedestrians, bicyclists and other vehicles at risk.

Another common activity among friends and family is to take still photos or videos. If the driver turns their head towards the camera while driving this along with any flash from the camera can cause a significant distraction that can put other road users at risk in the immediate area

Distracted Walking

Looking down at your phone or using your phone while walking at a crosswalk or j-walking is a dangerous activity. Honolulu, HI. and Stamford, Conn. have new laws to restrict the use of mobile phones while in a crosswalk.

I am asking the Public Safety Commission to request a presentation from city staff on what actions are being taken to prevent distracted walking.