
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY,
ALONG WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION,
TO STUDY THE MINIMUM SOUND LEVEL NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT
BLIND PEDESTRIANS CAN HEAR HYBRID AND OTHER "SILENT"
VEHICLES IN ALL PHASES OF THEIR OPERATION.

1 WHEREAS, vehicles designed to reduce harmful pollutants and
2 to operate with greater fuel efficiency include gasoline-
3 electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles; and
4

5 WHEREAS, in the foreseeable future, vehicle engine
6 technologies may include hydrogen fuel cell and other technology
7 that provides an alternative to those that rely partly or wholly
8 on internal combustion; and
9

10 WHEREAS, vehicle engines employing technologies other than
11 internal combustion generate virtually no sound while in
12 operation; and
13

14 WHEREAS, the total number of hybrid and electric-only
15 vehicles sold per year in Hawaii, as well as the rest of the
16 nation, is growing and may equal or exceed the number of
17 internal combustion engine vehicles in the near future; and
18

19 WHEREAS, people, including pedestrians, who are not blind,
20 such as bicyclists, runners, and children, benefit from the
21 multi-sensory information generated by vehicular traffic,
22 including the sound of vehicle engines; and
23

24 WHEREAS, blind pedestrians use the sound of vehicular
25 traffic to discern the speed, direction, and other attributes of
26 vehicles to traverse roads safely and independently; and
27

28 WHEREAS, hybrid vehicles, when operating on their electric
29 engines, and electric-only vehicles are difficult for blind

1 people to identify and track, rendering these vehicles
2 potentially dangerous when moving on the street, emerging from
3 driveways, moving through parking lots, and in other situations
4 where blind pedestrians and vehicles come into proximity with
5 each other; and

6
7 WHEREAS, vehicular design standards that consider the multi-
8 sensory nature of traffic detection and avoidance and require
9 vehicles to emit a minimum level of sound to alert pedestrians
10 and prevent accidents are necessary for the protection of the
11 public; and

12
13 WHEREAS, the failure to take action to ensure that blind
14 pedestrians can hear hybrid and other "silent" vehicles in all
15 phases of their operation will lead to pedestrian injuries and
16 fatalities; now, therefore,

17
18 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
19 Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
20 of 2009, the Senate concurring, that the United States
21 Department of Environmental Protection (EPA), along with the
22 United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), is requested
23 to study the minimum sound level necessary to ensure that blind
24 pedestrians can hear hybrid and other silent vehicles in all
25 phases of their operation; and

26
27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the EPA, along with USDOT, is
28 requested to recommend minimum sound standards applicable to
29 vehicles sold in, and licensed to travel on, the public roads of
30 the United States that include:

31
32 (1) An omni-directional sound with spectral characteristics
33 similar to those of a modern internal combustion
34 engine vehicle in all phases of operation, including
35 times when the vehicle is at a full-stop;

36
37 (2) A sound that varies in a way consistent with the sound
38 of vehicles with combustion engines indicating that the
39 vehicle is idling, maintaining a constant speed,
40 accelerating, or decelerating; and

41
42 (3) Standards that do not prescribe the apparatus,
43 technology, or method to be used by vehicle
44 manufacturers to achieve the required minimum sound

1 level;

2

3 and

4

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the EPA, along with the USDOT,
6 is requested to review all available research regarding the
7 effect of traffic sounds on pedestrian safety and consult
8 consumer groups representing individuals who are blind, other
9 pedestrians, cyclists, and advocates for the safety of children;
10 and

11

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
13 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Administrator of the
14 United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary
15 of Transportation.