

TITLE: California Driver Training Evaluation Study (Assembly Bill 1486, Veysey)

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FUNDING SOURCE: Special Senate Appropriation to DMV; subcontract to University of California Los Angeles (Ronald S. Coppin, project administrator)

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

The California Driver Training Evaluation Study was established by Assembly Bill (AB) 1486 (1969 General Session, Veysey) for the purpose of comparing benefits and costs of behind-the-wheel driver training, as given in California high schools by certified high school teachers, with that given by licensed commercial driving school instructors. Additionally, the bill specified a comparison of the standard six-hour training, or its legal simulator-assisted substitute (short training program) with an enriched program providing four extra hours behind-the-wheel (long training program).

SUMMARY:

Twelve thousand high school students were randomly selected and assigned to programs for training by public high school or commercial school instructors in long or short training courses. All schools had been first selected at random. Overall, males tested better in all training variables except those measuring attitudes; their subsequent accident and citation records were worse than the females. Fewer females were licensed, and they required longer to achieve this licensing. Overall licensing rate was low (47% at 6 months and 73% at 2 years). Commercially trained students tested somewhat better on most training variables and scored higher on the DMV road test; they showed no difference in accident rate and a very small increase in citations over public school students.

There was no consistent relationship between course length and subsequent driving record. Commercial training saved approximately \$20 per student. Students trained in the long programs 'tested higher on training variables and DMV road tests and were licensed sooner. There was no significant difference in subsequent accident or citation rates, although the public school males tended to have slightly fewer convictions ( $p > .10$ ). Short programs saved \$16 (commercial) or \$36 (public) per student. There appeared to be no significant differences between standard simulator and standard six-hour in-car programs. Short simulator courses were consistently worse than all other programs. Very few students reported practice either during or after training, and little use was made of student observation time in the car. Significant differences in teaching techniques were found on all variables; monitoring of the actual training procedures revealed significant differences between public and commercial instructors, short and long sessions, urban and suburban districts, simulator program and six car hours, and male and female students. Public training was significantly more often found in residential areas and light traffic conditions. Students in urban districts and students who had short lessons were also more likely to be trained in residential areas and under light traffic. Females similarly were more likely to be trained in residential areas and light traffic. Females were both rated lower in performance and given poorer training.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1975 AB 1588, Chapter 1015 (Hart) provided that school districts may contract out to private firms to provide driving instruction should they so desire. 1977 AB 2050, Chapter 358 (Dannemeyer) altered this legislation to increase the maximum reimbursable amount per student under this plan. Unsuccessful legislation was authored by Senator Montoya (1979, SB 155) to allow DMV to issue vouchers to eligible students. The vouchers would have been good for a training course at a certified licensed driving school,

which would redeem the vouchers through the State Superintendent of Public Schools.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A summary of the report "The Long Term Implication of the California Driver Training Evaluation study" by Jones was published in *Journal of Traffic Safety Education* 21(3), 11-12 &26.

A critique of the report by Walter Patterson was published in the January, 1975 issue of *Journal of Traffic Safety Education* and answered by Margaret Jones and Ron Coppin in the July issue.

In September of 1974, Leon G. Goldstein was commissioned by a volunteer organization called "The California Committee for Traffic Safety Education" to prepare a critique of the study. It was published in the April, 1975 edition of the *Journal of Traffic Safety Education*. A rebuttal by Raymond C. Peck and Margaret Jones was published in the October issue of *Journal of Traffic Safety Education*. Goldstein published a rejoinder to this rebuttal, also in the October, 1975 issue of the journal.

Based on a review of the issues, the California Committee for Traffic Safety Education concluded that the findings of the original study were valid (letter published in *Journal of Traffic Safety Education*, October, 1975). The Department established a committee to better coordinate the traffic safety education efforts of DMV and the driver training community. The initial committee held one meeting and was subsequently disbanded. However, a new committee involving departmental and driver education representatives was formed in 1996.