

# Capitola City Council

## Agenda Report



**Meeting:** March 12, 2026  
**From:** Police Department  
**Subject:** E-Bike Safety Action Plan

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**Recommended Action:** Receive an update on the City's e-Bike Safety Action Plan, including recent legislative outreach and the development of an e-bike permit program at New Brighton Middle School, and provide feedback on next steps.

**Background:** In April 2025, the City Council received a report regarding e-bike safety initiatives and directed the Mayor to sign a letter to State legislators outlining potential legislative changes to improve e-bike safety. Since that time, staff has continued implementing and refining a coordinated e-bike Safety Action Plan that focuses on education, partnerships, enforcement, and legislative advocacy.

E-bikes continue to provide important transportation and mobility benefits, particularly for students traveling to school and short-distance trips within the community. At the same time, increased use (especially among middle school-aged riders) has underscored the importance of ensuring that riders understand applicable traffic laws, operate legal equipment, and ride safely within the community.

As mentioned in April, under California law, e-bikes are limited to motors of 750 watts or less and are divided into three different categories, or Classes, as follows:

Class 1 = Pedal assist to up to a maximum of 20 mph

Class 2 = Throttle and pedal assist to up to a maximum of 20 mph

Class 3 = Pedal assist up to a maximum of 28 mph. Must be 16 years of age or older.

There are no minimum age requirements for Class 1 or 2 e-bikes.

**Discussion:** *Legislative Outreach*

Following City Council direction, the City shared its legislative priorities related to youth e-bike safety with staff for State representatives Dawn Addis and Gail Pellerin, as well as State Senator John Laird. These priorities focused on improving safety outcomes and establishing clearer expectations for youth riders across California.

The City's recommendations included establishing a minimum age of 14 for operation of Class 2 e-bikes, creating a written test and permit requirement administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles for riders under 16, and encouraging integration of traffic safety education into school curricula. Staff will continue to monitor legislative developments and engage with regional and state partners as additional policy proposals are considered.

*New Brighton Middle School E-Bike Permit Program*

As part of the City's e-Bike Safety Action Plan, staff is preparing to launch a pilot e-bike permit program in partnership with New Brighton Middle School (NBMS). The program is intended to help ensure that E-bikes brought to school and stored in the campus bike parking area comply with state law and are age appropriate for middle school-aged riders.

Under the program, students who ride an e-bike to school will participate in a brief safety orientation and register their bicycle with the school. The process will include verification that the e-bike meets legal requirements for youth riders, including that it falls within Class 1 or Class 2 specifications. Bikes that meet these requirements will receive a permit identifying them as approved for use and parking at the school. As a component of the partnership, the City intends to provide funding for permit stickers.

The program is intended to improve awareness among students and families regarding legal e-bike classifications and safe riding practices while reinforcing the educational efforts already underway at the school. Staff will work closely with school administration and parents during implementation and will evaluate the pilot program over the upcoming school year.

This spring, Santa Cruz City Schools will pilot an e-bike parking permit requirement at Branciforte and Mission Hill Middle Schools. This program would require students who park e-bikes at the schools to attend a safety course to receive an e-bike parking permit. Permits would only be issued to street legal e-bikes.

#### *Education and Outreach*

Education remains a central component of the City's e-Bike Safety Action Plan. The Capitola Police Department continues to provide annual safety presentations to students at New Brighton Middle School, focusing on rules of the road, helmet use, and safe riding behavior. The City also continues community outreach efforts aimed at increasing awareness among students, parents, and residents about safe and lawful e-bike operation.

These efforts are intended to promote long-term safety awareness and help reduce unsafe riding behaviors through early education and consistent messaging.

#### *Enforcement and Monitoring*

The Capitola Police Department continues targeted enforcement efforts related to e-bike safety, particularly during the school year and in areas where youth riders are most active. Enforcement focuses on helmet compliance, adherence to traffic control devices, safe riding practices, and identification of electric motorcycles or other devices that do not meet the legal definition of an e-bike.

In addition, the Police Department has begun using an e-bike specific code when documenting traffic incidents involving e-bikes. This will allow the City to better track trends over time and evaluate the effectiveness of the City's safety initiatives.

Over the last 14 months, the City has issued nine e-bike related citations and documented eight e-bike related traffic accidents. During this same time frame, PD has also documented eight "traditional" bike incidents. Data collection has been a challenge for these types of incidents and staff is exploring other ways to capture data while in the process of transitioning to a newer records management system.

Next Steps: Staff will continue implementing the e-Bike Safety Action Plan and will monitor the effectiveness of the NBMS permit pilot program, ongoing educational efforts, and enforcement activities. As additional information becomes available, including additional incident data and feedback from the school community, staff will return to City Council with updates and any potential adjustments to the program.

Fiscal Impact: Costs associated with the City's ongoing e-bike safety initiatives are included in the adopted FY 2025–26 Budget. Costs for E-bike permit stickers can be funded with the existing Police Department supplies budget.

Attachments:

1. April 2025 Letter to State Representatives

Report Prepared By: Sarah Ryan, Chief of Police

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk

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