

Gautho, Julia

From: Matt Miller <matt.miller@ecoact.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 4:14 PM
To: City Council
Subject: [PDF] Comment on Item 9.C E-Bike Safety for 4/10 Meeting
Attachments: City of Capitola - Letter of Support E-Bike Safety 4.9.25.pdf

Hello Mayor Clarke and City of Capitola Council,

Please find the attached letter regarding Item 9.C E-Bike Safety for tomorrow's meeting. Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this matter.

Best,

Matt Miller (he/him)
Director, Mobility Transformation

Direct **831.515.1324**
877 Cedar St. Suite 240, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
letsmodo.org | vamosmodo.org





4/9/25

City of Capitola City Council
420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, CA 95010
RE: Item 9.C. E-Bike Safety

Dear Mayor Clarke and Capitola City Council,

Ecology Action, a California environmental non-profit headquartered in Santa Cruz, works to advance equitable community climate solutions in high greenhouse gas emitting sectors, including transportation. Our Modo Active Transportation team offers youth pedestrian and bike safety education at schools across the county, including Capitola, transportation planning like Complete Streets to School and Active Transportation Plans, and hosts community events like Walk and Roll to School Day, and Bike to Work Day, and Bike Month.

One of the biggest developments in sustainable transportation in the last few years has been the proliferation of electric bicycles. The promise of contributing to sustainable, lower cost, and more accessible mobility for all ages remains high, but we acknowledge that the proliferation of electric bicycles and our social, regulatory, and infrastructure environments have not kept pace. The moment we're in right now is to maximize the benefits of electric bicycles as their popularity grows and reduce safety and public nuisance issues associated with them. We believe that electric bicycle safety can be addressed through education, behavior encouragement, and infrastructure. Just last week, our youth education team completed bike safety presentations at all 6th and 7th grade classes at New Brighton Middle School.

We applaud the City for working on this issue including efforts in education, community engagement, public awareness, and new electric bicycle specific data coding for traffic incidents with PD to inform future conversations and policy. While we support in principle the City of Capitola engaging with state officials to promote electric bicycle safety through some regulations, below are specific elements Ecology Action would like to add for consideration before moving forward.

On 1) Establishing a minimum age of 14 for Class 2 e-bikes – we understand the logic of applying an age minimum to Class 2 electric bicycles in line with other types of vehicles, and we'd support one only in a pilot context to determine the real safety benefits of introducing an age minimum. We do not have a specific age minimum recommendation. A pilot would allow monitoring and evaluation to potentially conclude that yes in fact excluding younger age groups improves safety. The consequences of this type of age restriction would lead to, for example, many students at New Brighton Middle School no longer being able to ride the electric bicycles they currently ride to school.

On 2) Establishing a written test/permit administered by the DMV for users less than 16 years old to use Class 2 e-bikes – we agree with People for Bikes that legal Class 1-3 electric bicycles should not require licensing, a written test, or a permit. From an equity perspective, we oppose adding financial and other barriers that would prevent access to this mode of sustainable transportation and create a new pretext for enforcement. Additionally, engaging the DMV could lead to electric bicycles being reclassified as motor vehicles which could subject them to similar regulations including registration, licensing, and insurance which again is a barrier and cost to adoption.



On 3) Require traffic safety education as essential core curriculum for schools – the current baseline in the U.S. is either elective education around pedestrian/bicycle safety in schools and other educational resources, or mandatory through drivers education to get a drivers license. Since most people participate in some way with our transportation system as a pedestrian, cyclist, transit user, or driver it makes universal traffic safety education a basic need for all. Ecology Action fully supports universal traffic safety education as an essential core curriculum in schools.

A final note that is not included in the staff report is on the topic of electric bicycle safety and infrastructure. We encourage the City of Capitola to include in the conversation about electric bicycle safety, how the physical infrastructure in the city contributes to the overall safety of all road users. We believe that an increase in bike ridership and electric bicycles in particular calls for applying strategies that reduce exposure to higher speed, high traffic volume roads and the addition of bike facilities, traffic calming measures, protected bike lanes, protected intersections, and more as important and proven methods to address road user safety across the board.

With a balance of education, behavior encouragement, and infrastructure Ecology Action is hopeful that Capitola can increase electric bicycle safety, and improve the livability, equity, and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Miller", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Miller
Director, Mobility Transformation