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ADDRESS

April 10, 2025

SUBJECT: E-Bike Safety for Youth

Dear REPRESENTATIVE

As Mayor of the City of Capitola, I am writing on behalf of our City to share concerns and recommendations regarding the regulation of electric bicycles (e-bikes). While we work diligently to enforce existing regulations at the local level, it is clear that these rules have not kept pace with advancements in e-bike technology and the rapid expansion of their use, particularly among our community's children and youth.

As you know, Capitola is a small coastal town with a footprint of just two square miles. Like many smaller cities, we face significant challenges in developing and enforcing a local regulatory framework to adequately address the complexities of e-bike use. A patchwork of local ordinances would not only be confusing to residents and visitors but it would also be difficult to enforce and be inconsistent with regional mobility patterns.

For this reason, we are urging the California Legislature to take the lead in establishing statewide e-bike regulations that prioritize safety while preserving the accessibility and environmental benefits of e-bike transportation. Below are three proposals we believe would have the most meaningful impact:

1. ***Establish a minimum age of 14 for Class 2 e-bikes:*** Class 2 bikes have a throttle and require no user pedaling input. Based on observations of rider behavior, the availability of a throttle on the Class 2 e-bikes can lead to less rider engagement and greater overall risk. Currently, there is no minimum age to ride a Class 2 e-bike. The minimum age to ride a Class 3 e-bike (assist up to 28 mph) is 16.
2. ***Establish a written test/permit administered by the DMV for users less than 16 years old to use Class 2 e-bikes:*** Currently, there is no test or permit required for use of an e-bike for any age/person.
3. ***Require traffic safety education as essential core curriculum for schools:*** In some other countries traffic safety education is integrated into school curriculum and community practices. In the US, drivers education is the only required traffic training and it's for people to drive a car, but comprehensive education on how to be a pedestrian, a bike rider, a transit user, etc. are relegated to elective educational opportunities.

We have reviewed these proposals for local and national bike advocacy groups, and we believe each of these proposals reflect a balanced approach—one that supports the benefits of e-bikes for sustainable transportation while addressing the very real safety concerns that are rising in communities like Capitola.



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I welcome the opportunity to bring a resolution to the Capitola City Council in support of any legislation that advances these goals and would be happy to further discuss these ideas with your office.

Thank you for your leadership and for your attention to this important issue.

In partnership,

Joe Clarke, Mayor
City of Capitola