



**JOINT PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
AND OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**PRC 26-14
October 29, 2026
Special Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 26-14: E-Bikes in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Policy Development	☒ Discussion Only ☐ Action Needed: ☐ Motion ☐ Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive report. No action necessary.	

STAFF:	Amelia Tjaden, Management Analyst Ryan Daly, Interim Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director Casey Troy, Interim Parks Operations Manager
EXHIBITS:	1. In-Person Engagement Overview 2. E-Bike in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Survey Data 3. Map of Mercer Island Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces 4. Comparison of Regional E-Bike Regulations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to present the findings of the E-Bikes in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Community Outreach Campaign that occurred from May through August 2026, and to seek a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and the Open Space Conservancy Trust (OSCT) on when and where e-bikes should be allowed in parks and open spaces.

- Mercer Island has seen an increase in usage of e-bikes, electric scooters (e-scooters), and electric motorcycles/electric dirt bikes (e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes) over the past two years.
- In November 2025, staff conducted a study session with the PRC and the OSCT to discuss regulations for e-bikes and e-scooters in parks and open spaces on the Island ([PRC 25-17](#)). The PRC and OSCT met again in January 2026 and requested that more information be provided and that staff engage the community more broadly on potential regulations.
- As such, the City conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign to engage the community on the development of e-bike regulations. The outreach campaign included an online survey that received 740 responses, four in-person engagement opportunities, and promotion across various City channels. Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Open Space Conservancy Trust actively engaged, alongside various staff, in each of the four in-person engagement opportunities.
- The key themes identified through the outreach were safety for trail users, concerns about youth operation of e-bikes and environmental impacts, and finally, maintaining accessibility of e-bikes for people relying on them to commute or exercise.
- [RCW 46.61.710](#) establishes regulations for where e-bikes can be operated but allows cities to adopt additional regulations for e-bike use.
- Staff have identified three approaches to create a policy statement for when and where e-bikes should be allowed in parks, trails, and open spaces based on regional examples, the outreach conducted, and previous work conducted with the PRC and OSCT.

BACKGROUND

Mercer Island has seen an increase in usage of electric bikes (e-bikes), electric scooters (e-scooters), and electric motorcycles/electric dirt bikes (e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes) over the past two years. Many of the

riders are 12-15 years of age and at times demonstrate unsafe riding behaviors, creating a danger to themselves and others.

In May 2025, the City Council amended the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the development of an ordinance regulating the operation of e-bikes and e-motorcycles on the Island (AB 6688). The following actions have been taken thus far:

- In September 2025, the Mercer Island City Council adopted Ordinance No. 25C-24 establishing regulations for e-motorcycles ([AB 6772](#)). Staff have also worked with the City's state representatives to pursue statewide regulations for e-motorcycles.
- In November 2025, staff conducted a study session with the PRC and the OSCT to discuss regulations for e-bikes and e-scooters in parks and open spaces on the Island ([PRC 25-17](#)).
- In January 2026, returned to the PRC and the OSCT to present a proposed policy for e-bike regulations in parks and open spaces ([PRC 26-01](#)). As a result of this meeting, the PRC and the OSCT requested that more information be provided and that staff engage the community more broadly on potential regulations.
- Staff presented an overview of the community engagement plan to seek public input on e-bikes in parks, trails, and open spaces in April 2026 ([PRC 26-07](#)). The community engagement plan included an online survey, as well as in-person engagement opportunities. The PRC established a subcommittee to review and approve the survey before it was posted publicly.

Current E-Bike Regulations

The City currently follows state laws governing how and where e-bikes can be operated. In short, e-bikes can be used in most places traditional bikes are allowed depending on the class of e-bike. Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes can be ridden anywhere traditional bikes are permitted – including mixed-use trails, bike lanes, and roads – unless otherwise noted. Class 3 e-bikes can be ridden on roads and paved trails that allow motorized vehicles but are not allowed on soft surface trails. Class 3 e-bikes are also prohibited on sidewalks and on shared-use paths.

In-Person Outreach Events

Representatives from the PRC and OSCT, alongside City staff, hosted the four in-person outreach events to engage directly with community members:

- May 15, 2026 – Bike to Work Day
- July 11, 2026 – Summer Celebration
- July 23, 2026 – Mostly Music in the Park
- August 9, 2026 – Mercer Island Farmer's Market

These four events were chosen to capture input from a diverse range of community members. Each outreach event featured a sticky-dot board exercise for community members to engage with, as well as a board educating the community current e-bike regulations. A summary of the sticky dot board exercises can be found in Exhibit 1. Engagement among staff, board members, and community members fostered numerous meaningful conversations and provided opportunities to share unique stories, perspectives, and experiences that may not have been captured through surveys or dot-voting exercises.

Survey

A subcommittee of the Parks & Recreation Commission was established to review and provide input on the development of survey questions and desired data points. The E-Bikes in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Survey was hosted online on the City's Let's Talk platform. The survey was open from May 12, 2026, through August 31, 2026, and received 740 responses. All data collected from the survey can be found in Exhibit 2. The survey questions focused on the community's use of the City's park and trail system, the operation of e-bikes, and perceptions of proposed regulations. The survey included up to fifteen multiple choice questions,

as well as three open-ended short answer questions. The total number of questions a respondent received depended on the answers they selected.

Survey Analysis

The goal of the E-Bikes in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Survey was to seek public input on how patrons currently use the park system, and where and what type of e-bikes should be permitted to be used in parks, trails, and open spaces. Key themes that emerged from the survey include:

- Safety for trail users not operating e-bikes was the largest concern among respondents seeking stricter regulations for e-bikes. Many respondents cited vehicle speed and conflicts between e-bikes and pedestrians as their primary concern. Trail width, use of electric assistance, and trail crowding were reported as factors influencing community perceptions on safety.
- Youth operation of e-bikes was one of the largest concerns reported in the open textbox sections of the survey, with many respondents asking for education and training, licensing requirements, or other regulatory changes.
- Survey respondents also highlighted concerns about the environmental impacts of e-bikes, as well as their potential to change the atmosphere of parks, trails, and open spaces.
- On the other hand, many survey respondents maintain positive or neutral perspectives on e-bikes, with many respondents asking to maintain accessibility and connectivity across the Island for e-bikes.

Demographics

The survey received 740 responses. 96% (709) of the respondents were Mercer Island residents and 69% (501) visit a Mercer Island park or open space 2-3 times per week. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the age group of respondents and whether they rent/own an e-bike. To note, 90% of respondents were 35 years or older. 73% (536) of respondents do not own or rent an e-bike. Of respondents who own an e-bike 29% (58) use their e-bike as their primary mode of transportation to and from work or school.

Table 1: Comparison of Respondent Age Group & Owners/Non-Owners of E-Bikes			
Age	% of Respondents	% Own/Rent an E-Bike	% Do Not Own/Rent an E-Bike
0-17	3%	53%	47%
18-24	1%	25%	75%
25-34	5%	18%	82%
35-44	25%	30%	70%
45-54	26%	28%	72%
55-64	19%	29%	71%
65+	21%	21%	79%

The survey also provided insight into the make-up of the survey respondents households. 66% (470) of respondents noted that there were 3 or more people that make up their household, with 55% (374) of respondents stating that there is at least one child in their household.

Community Sentiments

Table 2 shows how community members responded when asked “When and where should e-bikes be allowed on City of Mercer Island managed trails within parks and open spaces?” The table breaks out responses by whether the respondent indicated that they own/rent an e-bike.

Table 2			
Q9 When and where should e-bikes be allowed on City of Mercer Island managed trails within parks and open spaces? Select one.	All Respondents	Own/Rent an E-Bike	Do Not Own/Rent an E-Bike
Number of Respondents	727	198	536
On a case-by-case basis but not every trail or trail system in parks and open spaces.	21%	21%	21%
On every trail or trail system that currently allows bicycle use in parks and open spaces.	24%	62%	10%
E-bikes shouldn't be allowed on City of Mercer Island trails in parks and open spaces.	55%	16%	68%

83% (458) of respondents who selected that e-bikes should not be allowed or only be allowed on a case-by-case basis in parks, trails, and open spaces, reported trail safety and the speed at which e-bikes can go as a concern. 58% (319) reported concerns about potential impacts to park and trail conditions.

Of the respondents who responded that e-bikes should only be allowed on a case-by-case basis in parks, trails, and open spaces, 80% (124) reported that e-bikes should be allowed on trails designed or built for bicycle use. 56% (87) selected that e-bikes should be allowed on a trail-by-trail basis after evaluating possible environmental impacts and effects on the experience of other groups.

E-Bike Owners

27% (198) of survey respondents own an e-bike. 29% (58) use their e-bike as their primary mode of transportation to and from work or school. When asked why a respondent purchased an e-bike, 63% (124) of e-bike owners stated that their purchase allowed them to ride more trails and/or longer distances in their available time. 50% of e-bike riders reported using their e-bike as a cost-effective form of transportation. Aubrey Davis / Lid Park (I-90 Trail), Luther Burbank Park, and Pioneer Park were among the most popular locations where e-bike owners typically ride their e-bikes.

Promotion

Staff promoted the survey and in-person engagements on social media and across City channels. This included four social media posts and two articles in the MI Weekly. Staff also coordinated with the Mercer Island School District to send a notice to all district parents about the survey. Finally, staff submitted responses to interview questions from a student reporter at the Mercer Island High School Newspaper seeking information on the survey.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

The purpose of this agenda item is to present the findings of the E-Bikes in Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces Community Outreach Campaign that occurred from May through August 2026, and to seek direction from the PRC and the OSCT on when and where e-bikes should be allowed in parks and open spaces and additional considerations for their use. A map of Mercer Island parks, trails, and open spaces is included in Exhibit 3. Staff will have a large, printed version of this map at the meeting for reference.

[RCW 46.61.710](#) allows cities to adopt additional regulations, like limiting e-bike use in parks or on trails. Many jurisdictions, like the cities of Bellevue and Renton, utilize the regulations established under state law, while others have adopted stricter regulations. Exhibit 4 provides an overview of various cities and counties that have adopted additional regulations for e-bikes. Notably, under state law, the City cannot limit the use of any e-bike class on the I-90 trail because it is a multijurisdictional, shared-use path running adjacent to a highway.

Policy Options

Based on the outreach conducted, regional regulations for e-bikes, and previous conversations between the PRC and OSCT, staff have identified the following approaches as options to create a policy statement for the PRC and OSCT to consider (staff welcome other options for discussion as well):

- Status quo: do not adopt additional regulations for e-bikes in parks, trails, and open spaces. Utilize the current state laws governing how and where e-bikes can be operated.
- Permitted except where prohibited: some or all classes of e-bikes are allowed most places traditional bikes can go with some exceptions.
 - *For example, operation of e-bikes could be prohibited at Mercedale Park.*
- Prohibited except where permitted: some or all classes of e-bikes are not allowed in parks, trails, or open spaces, except in areas designated for their use.
 - *For example, class 1 and class 2 e-bikes could be allowed on paved trails.*

NEXT STEPS

Staff will develop a policy statement for where e-bikes should be allowed based on the feedback received from the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Open Space Conservancy Trust.

Staff anticipate another joint meeting between the PRC and OSCT to approve the policy statement and present recommendations for its implementation. Once finalized, the policy statement will be transmitted to the City Council for their review, eventually leading to the adoption of Citywide regulations for e-bikes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report. No action necessary.