



REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Jason Simpson, City Manager

Prepared by: Barbara Leibold, City Attorney

Date: April 28, 2026

Subject: Ordinance Regulating Electric Bicycles and Other Electric Transportation Devices

Recommendation

Introduce by title only and wave further reading of AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, ADDING TITLE 10, CHAPTER 10.54 OF THE LAKE ELSINORE MUNICIPAL CODE TO REGULATE AND PROVIDE FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT REGARDING ELECTRIC BICYCLES AND OTHER ELECTRIC TRANSPORTATION DEVICES

Background

Over the last few years, the City and the region as a whole have experienced a noticeable increase in the use of electric bicycles (e-bikes), motorized bicycles, motorized scooters and similar electric mobility devices operating on streets and bike paths. While these devices provide mobility benefits, their rapid growth has created safety concerns and confusion regarding where they may be legally operated.

Common concerns noted in the region include a lack of helmets by e-bike operators and passengers, reckless speeds, inattention, carrying too many passengers, and the increased potential for collisions due to use on sidewalks and roadways. The California Vehicle Code governs the operation of these devices on public streets and roadways. However, the Vehicle Code provides limited guidance for operation on City-owned and maintained facilities such as parks, trails, pathways, and open space areas.

E-Bike Ordinance

The proposed ordinance establishes operational rules, safety requirements, penalties, and enforcement measures to improve public safety and address the risks associated with the increased use of e-bikes in the community.

California law categorizes electric bicycles into three classifications:

1. **Class 1 Electric Bicycle:** An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of 20 miles per hour.
2. **Class 2 Electric Bicycle:** An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of 20 miles per hour.
3. **Class 3 Electric Bicycle:** An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of 28 miles per hour. Such electric bicycles shall be equipped with a speedometer.

Discussion

The proposed ordinance introduces several key provisions to ensure the safe and responsible operation of electric bicycles and other electric mobility devices. It establishes local regulations that clarify where and how electric bicycles, motorized bicycles, and motorized scooters may operate on City-owned and maintained property and properties that are publicly accessible, while reaffirming that the California Vehicle Code continues to govern their use on public streets and roadways.

Use on Public Streets and Roadways. Operation of electric bicycles, motorized bicycles, and motorized scooters on public streets and roadways will remain governed by the California Vehicle Code. Riders will be required to comply with all traffic laws and traffic-control devices, including stop signs and traffic signals.

Operation on Trails and Pathways. Electric bicycles and similar devices are prohibited on sidewalks, open space conservation areas, playgrounds, parks, landscaped areas, athletic fields, sport courts, school ground or public trail not specifically designated as a bicycle path or route, unless specifically posted.

E-Bike Ordinance

Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles may be ridden, and Class 3 electric bicycles are prohibited, on the following public trails within the City:

1. All skate parks, designated as such, owned or operated by the City
2. BMX Pump Track
3. Lake Elsinore Levee Trail
4. Murrieta Creek Trail

Helmet Requirements. Helmet requirements under the ordinance are aligned with state law. All persons under eighteen must wear a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet while operating or riding as a passenger on an electric bicycle, or while operating an motorized scooter on a public street, bikeway, or trail. In addition, all operators and passengers of a Class 3 electric bicycle are required to wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet regardless of age.

Safety Standards. E-bikes must be equipped with essential safety features in compliance with state and federal safety standards, such as a front-facing white light for night riding, as well as reflectors on both wheels and the rear. Additionally, riders are required to stay as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or utilize designated bike lanes and travel in the same direction as vehicles. The ordinance also prohibits tampering with or modifying an electric bicycle so as to change the speed capability of the bicycle unless he or she appropriately replaces the label indicating the classification.

Unsafe Operation Prohibited. In addition to location-based restrictions, the ordinance establishes a general safety standard prohibiting the operation of electric bicycles, motorized bicycles, or motorized scooters in an unsafe manner that endangers the safety of any person or property. "Unsafe manner" includes operating in such a way as that violates any provision of State law or the City's municipal code, riding in prohibited areas, underaged riders or illegal modifications, or constitutes a danger to the operator, a passenger, other motorists, other riders, or pedestrians in the area. The ordinance makes it unlawful to operate e-bikes on highways, roadways, other public areas while performing stunts such as wheelies, endo wheelies (stoppies) or other reckless or dangerous behavior. Operating an electric bicycle while utilizing a hand-held mobile communication device, such as using a mobile phone to text, is also prohibited.

Enforcement and Penalties. Violations of the ordinance are subject to administrative citations or may be subject to enforcement and punishment as a misdemeanor. Violations are also deemed to be a public nuisance. Parents of minors are responsible for any fees or penalties associated with a violation of the ordinance. Any person found in violation of any provision of this Chapter may, in lieu of payment of a fine or other penalty, be required to complete a City-approved training and education class on the safe operation of electric bicycles. In certain circumstances, including obstruction of public rights of way, electric bicycles can be impounded.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – E-Bike Ordinance