



## CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

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**TO:** City Council **DATE:** March 9, 2026

**DEPARTMENT:** Administration, Public Works

**PREPARED BY:** Isaac Whippy, City Manager

**PRESENTER:** Isaac Whippy, City Manager

**AGENDA TITLE:** Receive Report and Public Safety Committee Recommendation Regarding Enforcement of Motorized Vehicles including Electric Bicycle Prohibition on the Coastal Trail

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### RECOMMENDATION

Receive staff report and provide direction regarding the appropriate enforcement strategy for the existing prohibition of electric bicycles (e-bikes) on the Coastal Trail.

Options for Council Consideration include:

1. Education-first approach with enhanced signage
  2. Progressive enforcement (warnings followed by citations)
  3. Active enforcement through patrol and citation
  4. Alternative policy review and potential code amendment
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### BACKGROUND

Electric bicycle usage has increased significantly statewide, including Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes. Staff and community members have observed a noticeable rise in e-bike activity on the Coastal Trail, resulting in pedestrian conflicts, speed concerns, and public safety complaints.

The Coastal Trail is heavily used by:

- Pedestrians
- Families and children
- Seniors
- Visitors

The prohibition on motorized bicycles was adopted to preserve pedestrian safety, protect coastal habitat, and maintain the intended character of the Coastal Trail as a pedestrian-priority facility.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8B

The Public Safety Committee reviewed this matter and recommended enhanced enforcement through the installation of larger, highly visible signage clearly indicating that electric bicycles are prohibited.

Council direction is now requested regarding the preferred enforcement model.

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

The City of Fort Bragg Municipal Code prohibits electric bicycles on the Coastal Trail.

Under Chapter 9.68 – Parks Preservation, motorized bicycles and scooters are prohibited in City parks. Because electric bicycles are motor-powered devices, they fall within the definition of “motorized bicycles” for purposes of park regulation. Violations of this chapter are enforceable under the Municipal Code.

Additionally, Chapter 10.58 – Bicycle Regulations authorizes restrictions on bicycle operation where posted. While this chapter does not specifically reference electric bicycles on the Coastal Trail, it supports the City’s ability to regulate bicycle use in designated areas.

Because the Coastal Trail is a City park facility and pedestrian-priority pathway, the existing Municipal Code provides authority for enforcement.

However, the use and popularity of e-bikes and other motorized conveyances has risen significantly throughout the state since Fort Bragg originally enacted its prohibition. Many tourist sites have moved to regulation to accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The issue before the Council is how the City wishes to implement and enforce the existing prohibition and whether to update and regulate use in a consistent, safe, and visible manner.

In 2025, state law was updated to allow the following classification of e-bikes and other motorized devices (e.g. motorized boards, scooters, mopeds and pocket bikes) on public streets and bike lanes:

Class 1: Provides pedal-assist up to 20 mph.

Class 2: Pedal-assist and throttle-assist up to 20 mph.

Class 3: Provides pedal-assist up to 28 mph.

E-bikes provide a boost up to the stated limits but do not prevent the operator going faster by pedaling harder. The bike motor does not provide additional propulsion assistance beyond the stated limit. Under state law there is no age restriction for operation of Class 1 or 2 but Class 3 operators must be 16 or older and all Class 3 riders must wear a helmet regardless of age. Standard youth helmet law requiring riders of any type of bike, motorized or not, under age 18 to wear a helmet apply.

Some local jurisdictions have updated their restrictions to incorporate the above classifications and adopt regulations appropriate to the classification of e-bike including which classification is permitted in protected or sensitive areas. For example, California state parks allow the use of class 1 and 2 e-bikes on paved and unpaved roads, bike paths, and trails unless specifically prohibited while class 3 bikes are prohibited except on roads and bike paths. **Safety Considerations**

E-bikes are capable of higher sustained speeds than traditional bicycles. On narrow or congested segments of the Coastal Trail, speed differentials or reckless or negligent operation increase the risk of collision and injury, particularly for children, seniors, and individuals with mobility limitations.

### **Enforcement Consistency**

While the prohibition exists in code, enforcement has been limited due to:

- Insufficient signage
- Public confusion regarding e-bike classifications
- Limited proactive patrol capacity

Clear signage and/or regulation is necessary to ensure compliance and support defensible enforcement.

### **Public Safety Committee Recommendation**

The Public Safety Committee recommended:

- Installation of large, highly visible signage at all trail entry points
- Clear language stating electric bicycles are prohibited
- Notice that violations may result in citation

Clear signage is critical for enforceability. Courts generally require adequate public notice before citation enforcement is upheld. The Public Safety Committee recommended installation of larger, highly visible signage at all Coastal Trail access points to clearly communicate that electric bicycles (all classes) are prohibited under Chapter 9.68.



Council direction is requested regarding the enforcement model, including whether the City should:

- Emphasize education and voluntary compliance
- Implement progressive enforcement (warnings followed by citations)
- Initiate active citation-based enforcement
- Or revisit the policy framework

## ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS

Council may consider the following approaches:

### Option 1 – Education & Signage (Committee Recommendation)

- Install large-format signs at all access points
- 60–90 day education period
- Warnings prior to citations

### Option 2 – Progressive Enforcement

- Install signage
- Short education period
- Warnings followed by citations

### Option 3 – Active Citation Enforcement

- Immediate enforcement with citation
- Scheduled patrol presence

#### Option 4 – Review Current Policy and Direct Code Amendment

- Should certain classification be permitted
- Appropriate restriction and regulation
- Sufficient enforcement capability
- Clarification of unsafe operation

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE**

Costs include fabrication and installation of large-format signage at trail entry points. Enforcement would be absorbed within existing Police Department operations, subject to staffing availability.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN/COUNCIL PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**

This item aligns with:

- Public safety
- Protection of natural resources
- Community quality of life

### **IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

Subject to Council direction:

- Signage design and fabrication: 30–45 days
- Installation: Immediately upon receipt
- Enforcement phase-in (if applicable): Following Council-approved approach

### **ATTACHMENT**

1. Relevant Municipal Code Sections (Chapter 9.68 and 10.58)
2. Draft Signage Language