

Michele Robb
626 Stewart Street
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

March 30, 2016

Tom Varga
Public Works Director
City of Fort Bragg
416 North Franklin Street
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Linda Ruffing
City Manger
City of Fort Bragg
416 North Franklin Street
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Re: Segways on Noyo Headlands Trails

Dear Mr. Varga and Ms. Ruffing:

I am writing to oppose the City permitting the use of Segways on Noyo Headlands Park trails. This is a bad idea for all kind of reasons:

First, the City is ignoring its own rule about "no motorized vehicles" on the trails. A sign very specifically states this at the entrance of the park. Segways are not driven by humans, they are driven by a motor.

Second, I was told the Segways would move at a "walking pace" of approximately 6 miles an hour. Anyone other than a power walker averages about 3 miles an hour, which means the Segways will be doing twice the normal average. Sure, bikes can go faster, but they are powered by people power, not motors, and therefore more controllable than a machine. Plus, most people on a bike have been riding since they were kids and have plenty of experience and understanding of bike safety.

Third, anyone who has walked the trails on the weekend knows how crowded it can be. Add clusters of Segways to the mix and the enjoyment factor for walkers and bikers goes way down. There are families strolling with small kids, folks with dogs – all kinds of unpredictable "hazards" dashing in front of them.

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Fourth: Who is responsible for enforcement of the laws regarding Segways?

From California regulations regarding Segways:

"SEC. 5. Section 21281.5 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read: 21281.5. (a) A person shall not operate an EPAMD (which is defined as "An electric personal assistive mobility device") on a sidewalk, bike path, pathway, trail, bike lane, street, road, or highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, pedestrians, and other conveyance traffic on, and the surface, width, and condition of, the sidewalk, bike path, pathway, trail, bike lane, street, road, or highway. (b) A person shall not operate an EPAMD at a speed that endangers the safety of persons or property. (c) A person shall not operate an EPAMD on a sidewalk, bike path, pathway, trail, bike lane, street, road, or highway with willful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property. (d) A person operating an EPAMD on a sidewalk, bike path, pathway, trail, bike lane, street, road, or highway shall yield the right-of-way to all pedestrians on foot, including persons with disabilities using assistive devices and service animals that are close enough to constitute a hazard."

Not once have I seen a city or park official monitoring the trails - there has been no need for them to do so. Will the City now provide someone to enforce the laws regarding Segway use? In the case of an infraction the Segway user will be long gone before anyone in authority arrives to do something about it.

Fifth, the reason for allowing Segways to operate on city streets is to eliminate congestion and pollution. Again, from the California's regulations on Segways:

"SEC. 4. Section 21280 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read: 21280. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following: (1) This state has severe traffic congestion and air pollution problems, particularly in its cities, and finding ways to reduce these problems is of paramount importance. (2) Reducing the millions of single passenger automobile trips of five miles or less that Californians take each year will significantly reduce the pollution caused by fuel emissions and aggravated by automobile congestion."

As you can see, the regulations were not enacted to boost tourism, they were specifically to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, neither of which is a problem in Fort Bragg.

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Sixth, Lynn Baumgarner, who is renting the Segways, says the minimum age for rental is ten years old. Pretty young for an individual to operate a motorized vehicle.

Seventh, Ms. Baumgarner informed me that the training to use a Segway is about 20-30 minutes. But think about it: we don't let anyone drive a car without hours of training and a licensing process, and even then we don't let them drive on crowded park trails.

Eighth, and probably my most important concern, is that one of the great enjoyments of using the park is the unencumbered views of the ocean and listening to the sounds of nature: the waves crashing on the shore, the call of sea birds, wind in the grass. Now imagine trying to lose yourself in these sights and sounds while keeping eyes and ears peeled for clusters of Segways approaching from behind or interfering with the view.

I live on Stewart Street a few blocks from the rental company, and I walk the north Noyo Headlands trail on an almost daily basis. It is one of the great pleasures of my day. Having Segways on the trails will diminish this pleasure considerably.

Please take these concerns into consideration when you discuss permitting them to use the Noyo Headlands trails. I would appreciate being kept informed of the permitting process so I can appear at the hearings.

Thank you,



Michele Robb

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