




MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: August 24, 2018

SUBJECT: Code Revision Regarding Electric Bikes & Scooters

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the requested information regarding the use of electric bikes and scooters in City parks and on trails. Current Code 8-1-31 explains that motor driven devices are prohibited on parkland. The City Code *"prohibits motor vehicle(s) and all motor driven devise(s) from being driven on public recreational areas other than a public roadway or in a parking area of a public recreation area."*

A "public recreation area" is defined as: *"a park, recreational facility, athletic field, building, swimming pool, playground, nature preserve, trail, dock, or greenbelt managed, maintained, or operated by the Parks and Recreation Department or on the Department's behalf."* (City Code 8-1-1(11)).

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is in the process of reviewing options and implications of a comprehensive code review and revision with our partners in Austin Transportation Department (ATD). Community feedback and input regarding the use of electric bikes and motorized vehicles on trails is essential. As such, there are multiple public surveys in some stage of implementation. The Trail Foundation conducted a public survey that closed on August 20th. Initial responses indicate that approximately 70% of respondents are against allowing electric bikes and scooters on the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail. The remaining 30% were in favor of electric bikes and scooters on parkland trails and mention the need for enforcement of a 10mph speed limit. ATD is also conducting a city-wide survey and the results are pending.

Recently, PARD met with Bike Texas and Bike Austin leaders to discuss their position regarding motorized vehicles on trails, specifically electric bikes and scooters. These advocacy groups are in favor of code revisions that at a minimum allow electric bike on trails. It is important to note this initial meeting did not detail specific code revisions, but instead discussed general philosophies and industry trends.

As PARD works with ATD to consider code revisions and implications, it must take into account:

- All trail users, including recreational users such as walkers, walkers with dogs or strollers, cyclists, and joggers,
- trail capacity and trail width,
- potential user conflicts,
- community input,
- trail "classifications" and intended purposes, and
- enforcement and trail monitoring capacity for trail speed, etiquette, and safety.

PARD is very aware of its trail contribution to both the transportation network and the urban trail network. Similarly, PARD is cognizant many trails are constructed for recreational users and may not have the capacity and infrastructure to safely accommodate motorized vehicles, scooters and/or electric bikes. PARD must rely on assistance from the Austin Police Department for code and ordinance enforcement.

Staff have met internally and researched the issue as it relates to other cities and parks and recreation departments. In the next month PARD will:

- Meet with ATD staff to brainstorm options and implications of code revisions;
- Meet with additional key stakeholders regarding the issue to gather additional community input;
- Provide communications to community partners and advocates regarding the discussion and progress toward addressing the issue;
- Attend the Pedestrian Advisory Council; and
- Update the Parks and Recreation Board regarding progress toward addressing the issue.

PARD will continue to enforce the existing ordinance until a consensus between PARD and ATD (to be inclusive of community input) regarding an amended regulation can be recommended and approved. Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

Cc: Lucas Massie, M. Ed., CPRP, Acting Assistant Director
Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, Assistant Director,
Anthony Segura, Assistant Director
Suzanne Piper, DBA, Assistant Director