



Bicycle Advisory Council

Recommendation 20180918-5D: Urban Trails E-Bike Pilot Program

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is to advise the City of Austin and other jurisdictions on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle, bicycle infrastructure, and individuals of all ages and abilities who utilize bicycles;

WHEREAS, Urban Trails are major routes and off-street refuges for people walking, running, and biking that are safe, continuous, shaded, and protected;

WHEREAS, the city has developed, invested in, and improved Urban Trails to conserve their natural resources, and to serve pedestrians and bicyclists, residents and visitors alike;

WHEREAS, e-bikes are a significant, growing form of mobility that let more people get around Austin without producing greenhouse gas emissions;

WHEREAS, e-bikes are often used by less able community members, and hold the promise to get more people to ride bikes by reducing barriers of geography and fitness;

WHEREAS, other cities in the U.S., such as Seattle, are in the process of amending park regulations or have trial programs for e-bike use on urban trails and park paths;

WHEREAS, there is a concurrent effort between PARD and other stakeholders toward a resolution defining regulations surrounding e-bikes, and this Recommendation is intended to support the process;

WHEREAS, Section 541.201 (24) of the Texas Transportation Code defines e-bikes or electric bicycles to mean a bicycle that: (A) is designed to be propelled by an electric motor, exclusively or in combination with the application of human power; (B) cannot attain a speed of more than 20 miles per hour without the application of human power; and (C) does not exceed a weight of 100 pounds;

WHEREAS, Austin City Code of Ordinances 12-1-21 (B) allows bicycles equipped with an electric motor capable of propelling the bicycle, scooter, or vehicle at a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour to use on-street bicycle infrastructure;

WHEREAS, City Code Section 8-1-31 and current park rules do not allow for the use of electric bikes on city park trails including the Butler Trail (Park Use Rule 5): *(A) A person may not operate or use a motor vehicle or a bicycle on a trail or path that is not designated for the use of the motor vehicle or bicycle, (B) On a trail, a bicyclist shall yield to a runner or a walker, and a runner shall yield to a walker, (C) People on bicycles may not be more than two abreast if this impedes other traffic on the trail, and a person using a trail must leave ample room on the trail for other people to pass safely, (D) A bicyclist must use a bicycle that is in good condition and equipped with properly functioning brakes, and operate the bicycle in a safe manner at a prudent speed, (E) Unless otherwise posted, all portions of the hike and bike trails are designated as bicycle speed zones and shall be identified by signage, and a bicyclist may not travel faster than 10 miles per hour in an area designated as a bicycle speed zone;*

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Bicycle Advisory Council recommends:

The creation of a 1-year pilot program beginning on October 1, 2018 by PARD and ATD staff to:

1. Study the use of e-bikes (independent of e-scooters) on Urban Trails;
2. Observe and collect data on the modes, speeds and behavior of all users of Urban Trails; and
3. Establish the framework for future amendments to PARD Park Use Rule 5 and City Code Section 8-1- 31 that:
 - a) Respects the vision of Butler Trail as a quiet place for the community to enjoy nature in the city;
 - b) Benefits the comfort and experience of all users of the trail, and minimizes potential conflicts;
 - c) Includes education and outreach campaigns to promote safe biking practices and courteous trail use;
 - d) Reclassifies electric bikes as a category aligned with city legal definitions of bicycles; Integrates the Urban Trails as a connection for legal e-bike users within the on-street all-ages-and-abilities bicycle network;
4. Make recommendations for infrastructure improvements based on the findings of the pilot program;
5. Report the findings of the pilot program to the BAC within three months of the end of the pilot program.

Date of Approval: September 18, 2018

Record of the vote: 9-0

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tomasita Louviere-Lignons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature, there is a faint, light-colored watermark or stamp that is partially obscured and difficult to read.

Tomasita Louviere-Lignons, BAC Chair