



Date: December 19, 2025

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Grace H. Yoon, Deputy City Manager 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Status Update - E-Bike Safety Initiative**

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On [October 21, 2025](#), the City Council directed the City Manager to coordinate with all relevant City departments and other jurisdictions as necessary to develop a public safety initiative and amendments to the Long Beach Municipal Code, which would provide local safety regulations related to e-bike usage within the City's public rights-of-way and the Los Angeles County river paths along the Long Beach city limits. As part of this recommendation, City Council requested staff to return within 90 days with a memo and presentation to further discuss and reach consensus on e-bike safety regulations for the City.

This early report provides a preliminary status update on the interdepartmental work underway to review existing laws, explore potential municipal code updates, and assess opportunities for community education. Additional time is needed to conduct legal analysis, coordinate across multiple departments and jurisdictions, evaluate best practices from other cities, and ensure that any proposed regulations are practical, enforceable, and aligned with broader transportation safety initiatives already underway. Staff will continue this work in the coming months and plan to return to Council with a full presentation before the end of May 2026. This report is organized into the following sections:

- Background and Context
- Current Education Campaign and Outreach Efforts
- Potential Municipal Changes and Policies
- Upcoming Work and Next Steps

## **Background and Context**

To inform these recommendations, it is important to first establish the current landscape of e-bike usage and regulation. The following section provides background context, including key definitions, existing legislation, and enforcement practices that frame the City's approach to public safety.

### *Community Complaints and Unsafe Practices*

The City has received increasing complaints from residents about unsafe e-bike and e-moto practices. Common concerns include "flocking," or large groups of riders obstructing traffic; young and inexperienced riders operating high-speed e-bikes without helmets or training; and illegal modifications that increase speed or power beyond legal limits. Residents, particularly seniors, have voiced concerns about e-bike use on sidewalks, citing risks of collisions and near

misses. These complaints mirror trends reported statewide, where cities have documented rising injury rates among youth, unsafe sidewalk use, and collisions in parks, trails, and shared paths. Additionally, concerns have emerged around uncertified batteries and high-powered devices that pose fire hazards.

While many complaints are attributed to “e-bikes”, it is important to note that devices that exceed 28 miles per hour or 750 watts of power are not considered e-bikes under state law; they are classified as motorized bicycles or mopeds and are prohibited from multi-use paths such as the Beach Bike Path. In practice, vehicles capable of speeds over 20 miles per hour, performing wheelies, or other unsafe riding behaviors are often not e-bikes at all, but higher power vehicles that require motorcycle licensing or are not designed for use on highways.

To address these concerns, it is necessary to distinguish between true e-bikes and other high powered motorized devices. The following section outlines the legal definitions, classifications, and enforcement practices that clarify which vehicles fall under state e-bike law and which do not.

### *Definitions, Legislation, Enforcement*

California law recognizes three distinct classes of electric bicycles, each with different operating characteristics and safety requirements. State law also defines other motorized vehicles that are grouped with or mistaken for e-bikes, which are relevant to many of the complaints received. A summary is provided below, and Attachment A includes excerpts from the DMV handbook with exact wording and vehicle code references for each category.

#### E-Bikes:

- Class 1 e-bikes: Pedal-assist only, with motor support capped at 20 miles per hour; riders under 18 are required to wear helmets.
- Class 2 e-bikes: Maximum assisted speed of 20 miles per hour, with a throttle, allowing riders to operate without pedaling; helmet requirements are the same as Class 1.
- Class 3 e-bikes: Pedal-assist only, capable of speeds of up to 28 miles per hour. Because of their higher speed, riders must be at least 16 years old and helmets are required for all users.

#### Non E-Bike Types:

- Pocket Bike/Mini Motorcycles: Two-wheeled motorized devices not designed or manufactured for highway use; illegal on highways, sidewalks, bikeways, and hiking or recreational trails
- Motorized Bicycle (Moped): Two or three-wheeled devices with pedals for human propulsion or no pedals if powered solely by electrical energy. Motor produces less than 4 gross brake horsepower; maximum speed 30 miles per hour. Requires a driver license with a M-1 or M-2 endorsement, and helmets are mandatory.
- E-Motos: Motorized vehicles without pedals, designated for operation “off the highway”

These distinctions are critical because they determine where and how different types of e-bikes and e-motos may be operated, guide the City’s responses to complaints and concerns, and shape the enforcement tools available to local jurisdictions. A key compliance challenge is that many vehicles may be marketed or sold as “e-bikes” but do not meet the legal definition under the California Vehicle Code. High-powered models, often capable of high speeds well beyond those permitted for e-bikes, are frequently used by younger riders without sufficient driving experience. This trend underscores the importance of clear community education and outreach to ensure residents understand the differences among vehicle types and the safety requirements that apply.

### *Current Laws and Regulations*

The California Vehicle Code (§312.5) establishes the three e-bike classes and requires manufacturers and distributors to affix a classification label to each device. This labeling is intended to help riders, law enforcement, and the public distinguish between permissible e-bike types and higher-powered devices that fall outside the definition. State law also sets helmet and age requirements, as noted above, and prohibits Class 3 e-bikes from being operated on sidewalks. Local jurisdictions, including Long Beach, retain authority to adopt additional rules governing e-bike use on city streets, sidewalks, trails, and rights-of-way.

Recent legislation, such as Senate Bill 586, has further clarified distinctions between e-bikes and “off-highway electric motorcycles” (sometimes referred to as E-Motos). These updates underscore the need for cities to align their municipal codes with evolving state definitions while tailoring local rules to address community-specific safety concerns.

### *Enforcement Considerations*

While new regulations may be helpful, many unsafe behaviors are already citable under existing bicycle and traffic laws. Conduct such as riding under the influence, obstructing traffic, traveling against the flow of traffic, or failing to yield is subject to enforcement under the Vehicle Code. Requirements such as proper lighting at night and the use of bells to alert pedestrians also apply to e-bike riders. Importantly, Class 3 e-bikes are prohibited on sidewalks under state law, while Classes 1 and 2 may be permitted at speeds up to 20 miles per hour unless restricted locally.

However, enforcement alone cannot resolve the confusion between e-bikes and higher-powered E-Motos, nor can it fully address the lack of awareness among parents, youth, and community members about safe riding practices. These challenges highlight the importance of pairing enforcement with education.

### **Current and Planned Education Campaign and Outreach Efforts**

In parallel with a review of potential regulatory updates, City staff across the departments of Health and Human Services, Public Works, and the Police Department have already partnered up to initiate a comprehensive education and outreach campaign to promote safe e-bike use and reduce confusion among riders, parents, and community members. The campaign is designed to clarify the differences between e-bike classes, distinguish e-bikes from higher-

powered “e-motos,” and reinforce safe roadway practices such as helmet use and proper signaling.

### *School-Based Outreach*

Recognizing that many safety concerns originate with youth riders, the City has prioritized outreach through the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD). Staff have already participated in three Lunchtime Education Expos at middle schools, responding to requests from school social workers and Parent Family Facilitators. These events provided direct engagement with students, teachers, and parents on topics such as helmet fittings, safe riding behaviors, and the risks of illegal modifications. See Attachment B for a flyer distributed at these events.

The City will continue to build on its strong relationships with LBUSD staff to expand education efforts across campuses. The Health and Human Services Department is collaborating with school staff and volunteers to develop an e-bike safety training course that prepares new e-bike riders to understand both the differences among vehicle types and the responsibilities of riding at e-bike speeds. In addition, the City is working with the LBUSD School Board to strengthen enforcement of e-bike protocols on school grounds and to consider amendments that streamline safety practices across the district. There is also opportunity for partnership around warning tags on illegal vehicles on campus or creating a permitting process on campus. Both options would need further research and collaboration to ensure all schools and principals are onboard and ensuring school and City staff have capacity for these types of programs.

Beyond the K–12 system, the City is establishing partnerships with Cal State Long Beach, Long Beach City College, and local bicycle advocacy organizations to ensure consistent messaging and broad community engagement. These relationships are in the early stages and will require some time for continued collaboration and alignment on strategic approaches.

### *Public Campaign and Digital Resources*

Outreach to the general public will formally launch during Bike Month in May, with coordinated events and educational materials distributed citywide. One highlight of the campaign will be Community Electric Bike Demo Days, modeled after programs initiated by People for Bicycles. These events will allow residents to test e-bikes, learn from local experts and businesses about appropriate bike types, and celebrate safe cycling practices. Buying locally will be a large part of the campaign to ensure residents are buying suitable e-bike classes for their needs and experience level. The City intends to sustain education throughout the year by participating in community events and strengthening ties with the existing bicycle community.

The Public Works and Health Departments are collaborating on a public campaign that combines in-person outreach with printed and digital materials. A central hub for information will be maintained at [longbeach.gov/GoActiveLB](https://longbeach.gov/GoActiveLB), where residents can access up-to-date resources on e-bike safety, regulations, and community events. Social media and printed campaigns will complement this effort, ensuring that information is accessible to diverse audiences. Public Works is also in the process of updating the City’s Bike Infrastructure map that provides information on differing bike lane qualities around the City, which will also include e-bike class

specifics for differing bike lane types so the general public is aware of where certain bikes are allowed.

### *Community Rides and Funding Support*

The Health Department's *Walk and Roll Long Beach* team will continue to host community bicycle rides, which provide opportunities for new riders to build confidence, practice safe riding on new infrastructure, and strengthen neighborhood connectedness. These rides also encourage active transportation as a sustainable mode of travel in Long Beach.

Funding for the Health Department's Bike and Pedestrian Safety Program has been awarded through grants from the California Office of Traffic Safety since 2015 and the California Department of Transportation's Active Transportation Program since 2020. These grants allow the Department to provide community bicycle rides, e-bike programming, free safety gear, community education, and technical assistance to City departments that support the safe use of Long Beach's walking and bicycling infrastructure. Continuity of these activities will depend on the availability of these funds, underscoring the importance of sustained investment in education alongside enforcement.

### **Potential Municipal Changes and Policy Opportunities**

As noted above, many regulations governing e-bike use are already established under state law and the California Vehicle Code. However, there remain opportunities for the City to strengthen its municipal code, clarify definitions, and address community-specific concerns. Below are some areas that the interdepartmental team is exploring for potential feasibility.

Staff are reviewing options to add explicit "e-bike" language to the City's municipal code definitions, ensuring alignment with state law while clarifying expectations for riders, parents, and enforcement. This may include codifying distinctions between safe and unsafe behaviors - such as helmet use, sidewalk operation, and modifications that exceed legal speed or power limits - and ensuring consistency with neighboring cities to support effective enforcement.

There are also opportunities to add language to the LBMC on "unsafe riding practices." Similar laws have been passed in Huntington Beach (Municipal Code section 10.84.140), where riders may be cited for actions such as "riding on a sidewalk without due caution for pedestrians" or "intentionally lifting one or more wheels in the air while riding." Huntington Beach has also implemented a traffic school program that allows youth and their parents to have citations waived upon completion of an e-bike safety training course designed to clarify expectations for riding in public areas. Together, clearer definitions and explicit prohibitions would provide both the framework and the enforcement tools needed to address unsafe e-bike use.

Another area of consideration is the distinction between shared e-bike systems and personally owned devices. Shared systems, typically operated by third-party vendors, offer unique opportunities for enforcement through technology. These systems can override the users' actions to restrict access to prohibited areas, automatically reduce speeds in zones with heavy pedestrian traffic, and ensure compliance with State mandated speed limits. Personally owned

devices, by contrast, raise more complex questions about long-term enforcement, safe storage, and unauthorized modifications. Staff are assessing whether municipal code updates should differentiate between shared systems and personal devices to establish consistent and enforceable standards across both categories. Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) Chapters 10.51 and 10.71 similarly govern the use of privately owned and shared micromobility devices operating within the City.

In addition to potential code changes, staff are reviewing opportunities to strengthen infrastructure in ways that directly support safer e-bike use. Expanded signage, improved lane markings, and enhanced visibility along multi-use paths and parks could help riders better understand where e-bikes are permitted and what behaviors are prohibited.

As part of broader discussions on youth safety, staff have identified the concept of a school-based e-bike permitting system as an area that may warrant further exploration. Such a program could, in theory, provide principals with tools to track and manage e-bike use on campuses while reinforcing safety expectations among students and parents. This concept may warrant further exploration; however, any consideration of implementation would require significant coordination with the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD). Staff are flagging this concept as a potential avenue for future collaboration.

### **Upcoming Work and Next Steps**

An interdepartmental team with staff from the City Attorney's Office, City Manager's Office, Public Works, Health and Human Services, and Police Departments has been formed to review and implement the next steps. Staff are continuing to research how other jurisdictions have approached e-bike regulation in order to identify best practices that may inform Long Beach's municipal code updates. Internally, the interdepartmental team will continue discussions on potential municipal code updates, focusing on areas where clarification or expansion may be warranted. This collaborative process will ensure that any proposed changes balance safety, accessibility, and community concerns.

Staff plan to return to the City Council with a full presentation before the end of May. This timeline reflects the level of coordination required across departments and the need to balance this new assignment with existing Mayor and City Council priorities, including implementation of the automated speed camera system, continued assessment and delivery of neighborhood street-calming projects, and other transportation safety initiatives. The presentation will summarize research findings, outline potential municipal code updates, and provide recommendations for next steps in advancing e-bike safety across Long Beach.

For any questions, please contact Willie Walker, Parking and Mobility Officer in Public Works, at [Willie.Walker@longbeach.gov](mailto:Willie.Walker@longbeach.gov); Richard Nunez, Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention Officer in Health and Human Services, at [Richard.L.Nunez@longbeach.gov](mailto:Richard.L.Nunez@longbeach.gov); or Commander Shaleana Benson in Police, at [Shaleana.Benson@longbeach.gov](mailto:Shaleana.Benson@longbeach.gov).

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## ATTACHMENTS

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## MOTORIZED SCOOTER

A motorized scooter is defined as any two-wheeled “device” with:

- A motor, handlebars, and a floorboard for standing on when riding, and
- The options of having:
  - A driver seat which cannot interfere with the operator’s ability to stand and ride.
  - The ability to be powered by human propulsion.

**NOTE:** A motorized scooter may be driven with any class DL. A motorized scooter may not be used to take a skills test.

A motorized scooter’s exhaust system must not be modified or altered.

## LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

California issues the following DL classes for two-wheel vehicle operation:

- Class M1—You may operate any two-wheel motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, or motorized scooter and all vehicles listed under Class M2.

**NOTE:** The permit and DL requirements in this handbook pertain to two-wheel vehicles and are referenced in VC §12804.9.

- Class M2—You may operate any motorized bicycle, moped, or motorized scooter.

**NOTE:** Class C licensees may operate a motorcycle with a side car attached, three-wheel motorcycle, or motorized scooter.

## EARNING YOUR LICENSE

Safe riding requires knowledge and skill. Testing two-wheel vehicle operators is the best measurement of the skills necessary to operate safely in traffic because people often overestimate their own abilities. DMV’s licensing tests are designed to be scored objectively.

You may apply for a Class M1 or M2 DL at any DMV field office which provides DL services. To obtain your DL, refer to the Requirements for a Motorcycle M1 or M2 License section (see page 5). You will be required to pass the driver’s knowledge test, motorcycle knowledge test, knowledge test(s) for any other license class(es) requested and pass a motorcycle skills test or obtain a Certificate of Completion of Motorcycle Training (DL 389) as defined in the California Motorcyclist Safety Program Training Course section (see page 6).

Knowledge test questions are based on information in this handbook and the *California Driver’s Handbook*. The motorcycle skills test is conducted in either an actual traffic environment or in a controlled off-street area.

## MOTORCYCLE TYPE - LICENSE CLASS CHART

TYPE OF VEHICLE	VEHICLE CODE SECTIONS (§§)	CLASS OF LICENSE	VEHICLE DESCRIPTION
Motorcycle	400, 12804.9(b)(4)	M1	A motorcycle is a motor vehicle with a seat or saddle for the rider and is designed to travel on not more than three wheels.
Motor-driven cycle	405, 12804.9(b)(4)	M1*	A motor-driven cycle is a motorcycle with less than a 150 cc motor size. A motor-driven cycle does not include motorized bicycle.
Motorized bicycle or moped (capable of no more than 30 mph)	406(a), 12804.9(b)(5)(A)(i)	Any class of license**	A two- or three-wheeled device, capable of no more than 30 mph on level ground, and equipped with fully operative pedals for human propulsion or having no pedals if powered solely by electrical energy, a motor producing less than four gross brake horsepower, and an automatic transmission.
Electric bicycle	312.5(a), 12804.9(b)(5)(A)(i)	Not required	A bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts. There are three electric bicycle classes: Class 1 and 2 are capable of speeds of no more than 20 mph. Class 3 is capable of speeds of no more than 28 mph.
Motorized scooter <b>NOTE:</b> Cannot be used for a skills test.	407.5, 12804.9(b)	Any class of license***	A motorized scooter is defined as any two-wheeled device with an electric motor, handlebars, a floorboard for standing on when riding, and the option of having a driver seat which cannot interfere with the operator's ability to stand and ride and/or the ability to be powered by human propulsion.
<p>*Motor vehicles with less than a 150 cc motor size do not have the engine capability to be safely driven on a freeway or expressway.  ** A person holding a valid California driver's license of any class may operate a short-term (48 hrs. or less) rental motorized bicycle without taking any special examination for the operation of a motorized bicycle, and without having a class M2 endorsement on that driver's license.  *** A person holding a valid driver license of any class may operate a motorized scooter.</p>			

# Know Before You Ride: Quick Guide on Choosing the Right E-Bike



E-bikes are a fun, sustainable and convenient way to get around Long Beach, see below to learn more about which one may be right for you!

## Class 1: Best for First Time E-Bike Riders or Riders Under the Age of 16

- Includes pedal assist only
- Helmets required for riders under 18
- Safest option
- Allowed on all roads, bike lanes and multi-use paths including the beach bike path

Max Speed  
20mph

## Class 2: Best for Those With E-Bike Experience & Over the Age of 16

- Includes a throttle assist that allows use without pedaling and can accelerate quickly
- Helmets required for riders under 18
- Smaller battery life
- Allowed on all roads, bike lanes and multi-use paths including the beach bike path



## Class 3: Best for Adult E-Bike Commuters

- Includes pedal assist only
- Higher speed bike that will include a speedometer
- Helmet mandatory for all ages
- Must be 16 years or older to ride
- **Not** allowed on the beach pike path or other multi-use paths

Max  
Speed  
28mph



## Bikes Over 750 Watt Power

- Requires vehicular driving experience
- **Not** allowed on bike paths and must ride on vehicular roads only
- **Many big box stores advertise these as e-bikes, but California Vehicle Code classifies them as motorized bicycles or mopeds**

NOT AN  
E-BIKE

