

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: Proposed Changes to Eugene Code Related to Eugene Skateboard and Bike Laws

Meeting Date: May 27, 2014
Department: Public Works
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: 5
Staff Contact: Lee Shoemaker
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ISSUE STATEMENT

The City Council will receive a presentation on two proposed code changes to existing Eugene skateboard and bicycle laws. Eugene law prohibits the use of motorized transportation devices on off-street paths, including electric assisted bicycles. The first proposal is to change the Eugene City Code to allow electric assisted bikes to be ridden on Eugene off-street paths with the electric device engaged. Under Oregon law, electric assisted bicycles are considered bicycles and not motorized vehicles. Presently, there is a zone downtown where sidewalk skateboarding is not allowed and another zone where sidewalk bike riding is prohibited. The second proposed code change would modify the current downtown Eugene skateboard-bicycle no sidewalk riding zones into one combined area. No action is requested at this time.

BACKGROUND

Electric Assisted Bicycles

On February 14, 2005, the City Council approved a resolution prohibiting the use of all motorized transportation devices on off-street paths, including electric assisted bicycles, when not being operated exclusively by human power. While there was discussion of exceptions for electric assisted bicycles, the council at that time chose to prohibit all forms of motorized devices with exceptions for City staff and people with disabilities.

State law considers an electric assisted bicycle a bicycle rather than a motor vehicle and restricts the power of the electric motor and speed in which they can be operated (see attached Eugene and state law information).

Since that time, there are more people using electric assisted bicycles for transportation and recreation. We hear from people who want to purchase electric bikes or already have purchased them and want to know if there are restrictions on their use and they are disappointed that they don't have full access to all of Eugene's bikeways.

City staff held several stakeholder meetings and a public meeting in November 2013 to solicit input on the use of electric assisted bicycles and the downtown skateboard-bike no sidewalk

riding zone. Approximately 45 people attended the meeting with 27 people supporting this proposal and 10 people opposed. The main reasons cited in support were: need an extra boost especially when carrying children or cargo; this would help older, less fit, or people with physical limitations; want an alternative to driving a car; and, want to be able to use entire bike network. Most of those opposed were concerned about the speed of an electric bike and two cited the East Alton Baker Park Plan which discourages the use of motorized vehicles. Staff believes some of the opposition is based on confusing an electric assisted bicycle with motorized scooters.

Staff is bringing this proposal to the City Council for the following reasons: (1) Eugene's code is inconsistent with state law which considers an electric assisted bicycle to be a bicycle, rather than a motor vehicle, for purposes of the Oregon Vehicle Code, (2) legalizing the use on paths may increase biking usage, and (3) public requests. Staff proposes to make an exception to allowing electric assisted bicycles use on paths with the electric assist engaged in East Alton Baker Park. The exception could be revisited if that plan is updated.

Downtown Skateboard-Bicycle No Sidewalk Riding Zone Modification

City staff frequently hear complaints from the public about skateboard and bicycle sidewalk riding in downtown Eugene. Many of the complaints are from older residents who are concerned that they may be seriously injured if they are hit by a person riding on the sidewalk. There are two no sidewalk riding zones, one for people skateboarding and another for people biking (see attached map). Having two different zones is confusing to the public which may result in more violations.

Transportation planning staff also engaged the public and other City employees in a discussion of the downtown skateboard-bicycle no sidewalk riding zones. At the public meeting, 21 people supported a modification with 16 opposed. Reasons for supporting the zone modification included: more people are walking downtown; bike riding and skateboarding on downtown sidewalks creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians especially for seniors; and, there is a need to include the sidewalks around the 13th and Olive apartments and the Eugene Hotel. Reasons for opposing the zone modification: it will limit students' ability to skate and bike; zone is already too restrictive and it will limit downtown through-trips by skateboard; and, it's too dangerous to bike on downtown streets.

Through the community dialogue and discussions with Eugene police officers, a proposed new zone is recommended (see attached map) for council consideration. The factors used to determine the new zone were: pedestrian safety; public input; ease for the public to know boundaries of the zone; compact area for efficient enforcement; and reduced costs for stencils or signs.

Staff is bringing this proposal to the council for the following reasons: (1) increase pedestrian safety; and, (2) simplify the zone for better public understanding and enforcement.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

TransPlan (2002)

TSI Pedestrian Policy #1: Pedestrian

Provide for a pedestrian environment that is well integrated with adjacent land uses and is designed to enhance the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking.

Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2012)

Policy 2.1: Continually improve bicycling and walking comfort and safety through design, operations and maintenance including development of “low stress” bikeways to attract new cyclists.

Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Strategic Plan

3.1.5 Examine reasons for riding bikes on downtown sidewalks and work to ameliorate the problem through an education campaign and accompanying enforcement.

3.1.6 Re-examine the “no bikes on sidewalks” zone for possible expansion.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

Option 1 - Direct staff to prepare an ordinance and hold a public hearing on proposal to allow people to ride electric assisted bicycles on off-street paths with the electric assist device engaged.

Option 2 - Direct staff to prepare an ordinance and hold a public hearing on proposal to modify downtown no skateboard-bike sidewalk riding zone.

Option 3 – Voice support for existing laws.

CITY MANAGER’S RECOMMENDATION

No recommendation at this time. This item is scheduled for a July 21, 2014, public hearing. Following the public hearing, the City Manager will make a recommendation to be included on the council agenda and scheduled for action on July 28, 2014.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None. Information only.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Related Eugene Code and State Laws Related to Proposed Changes
- B. Map of Existing and Proposed Skateboard-Bike No Sidewalk Riding Zones

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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