



# TOWN OF FAIRFAX

## STAFF REPORT

### November 2, 2022

**TO:** Mayor and Town Council

**FROM:** Heather Abrams, Town Manager, Loren Umbertis, Public Works Director, and Rico Tabaranza, Police Chief

**SUBJECT:** Discuss Electric Bicycle (“E-bike”) Safety Actions in Fairfax

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#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Council discuss E-bike safety actions in Fairfax and receive a presentation from Safe Routes to Schools.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Fairfax community members have long been supporters of active transportation, i.e. pedestrians and bicycles, and they have been supportive of environmental efforts that reduce vehicle emissions. In addition, Fairfax has a reputation as a small town with a high value on safety. Increased E-bike use represents an environmental gain but comes with potential safety risks if E-bike riders do not ride appropriately.

Recently E-bikes have gained popularity, and a few very serious collisions involving fast and heavy E-bikes have occurred in Marin County. Marin County Bicycle Coalition's (MCBC) Executive Director, Tarrell Kullaway, recently appeared on local television discussing this emerging issue. One major concern is that young riders, who may not be mature enough, educated or experienced enough, now have access to motorized bicycles. Parents may not be aware that certain E-bikes have age restrictions, and that their insurance and their children's safety may be impacted if the E-bike riders are not an appropriate age or are not riding appropriately. Fairfax Police Department (FPD) enforces California Vehicle Code with a small staff responsible for enforcing all criminal and vehicular laws throughout the Town, and FPD focuses on community policing and education rather than punitive measures, when appropriate.

Council Member Goddard and Mayor Hellman have met several times with staff to discuss this issue and have invited Gwen Froh, Program Director of Marin Safe Routes to Schools and Education Director of MCBC, and also a League Certified Bicycle Safety Instructor, to present at this meeting on E-bike education being implemented in Fairfax and throughout Marin County. Safe Routes to Schools is funded by Transportation Agency of Marin (TAM) and offers several programs that address E-bike safety (see <https://www.saferoutestoschools.org/>). Council Member Goddard is a Safe Routes to Schools employee, a liaison to the Ross Valley Safe Routes To Schools Task Force, and is familiar with the issues surrounding bike safety. An E-bike safety letter from the Mayor was published in the September 6, 2022 Town Newsletter.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Town is currently taking several actions to encourage safe active transportation, which are described below, as are future actions that the Town is planning.

### **Current Actions**

As a part of its Climate Action Plan implementation, the Town is participating in the Ride and Drive Clean E-bike Discount Campaign, which begins November 1, 2022. The campaign was featured in the Town's Newsletter on October 25, 2022. In addition to discounts on a variety of E-bikes, residents can receive a free helmet, service plan, and no-interest financing. More information can be found at: <https://rideanddriveclean.org/ebike-discount-campaign/>. Town staff reached out to the campaign to make sure it included E-bike safety training. The campaign is offering two E-bike 101 webinars: November 2, 2022 at 5pm & Thursday, November 10, 2022 at 6pm; people may register at <https://rideanddriveclean.org/events/>.


Below is an example of current E-bike safety messaging from Ride and Drive Clean campaign:

### Safety for All

Ride and Drive Clean and The New Wheel advocate for safe riding. With an Ebike you can avoid riding along major thoroughfares. You won't mind taking side roads to get around heavily trafficked areas - the extra distance doesn't matter much with an Ebike.

Riding an Ebike means following the rules of the road and the bike paths. Our Ebike webinars provide guidance on how to ride safely, avoiding major roads, and how to ride safely to protect all others on the roads or paths. If you are buying an Ebike for your teen, please make sure they understand the rules of the road that will keep them and all community members safe.

Once you have your new bike, we'll point you to other organizations' in-the-saddle training programs.

A photograph of a road sign featuring a bicycle icon and the text "SHARE THE ROAD". The sign is yellow with a black border and is mounted on a post. In the background, a car is visible on a road, and there are green trees.

Several of MCBC and Safe Routes to Schools staff have been in communication regarding E-bike safety. Town staff understands that MCBC has a new program, E-bike Smart Marin, currently in development, so there is an opportunity for further collaboration on this issue. MCBC's Safe Routes to Schools (League Certified) education program is scheduled to teach curriculum with an E-bike safety component at White Hill Middle School this fall. These annual classes are mandated by the school so there is a captive audience of students. Safe Routes to School will continue to outreach to all high schools with comprehensive Share the Road curriculum that was taught annually at Archie Williams High School pre-pandemic.

Local middle and high schools have been active in promoting E-bike safety as well (an example is shown in Attachment A).

Fairfax is also currently participating in the countywide Street Smarts traffic safety program that educates drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists about safety issues, including distracted driving. The goal is to encourage people to adopt new attitudes and behaviors that will reduce the number of traffic-related accidents and make our streets safer for everyone. The Eyes Up Campaign focuses on specific behaviors that have demonstrated to be the most impactful. In Mid-October,

Town staff hung a large Fairfax-specific Street Smarts banner across Sir Francis Drake Blvd for two in October. There are also campaign flags mounted on light poles, and lawn signs have also been placed by Fairfax’s public works department near eye level in strategic locations in Town. An article regarding the Street Smarts Campaign will be included in the next Town Newsletter.

Below are the graphics used in the campaign:



Future Actions

*Sharrows Downtown*

As a result of resident and business concerns regarding bicycles (E-bikes in particular) being ridden on sidewalks in downtown, staff investigated options to communicate that bicycles are vehicles allowed to take the full lane on any road, per California Vehicle Code ([https://www.calbike.org/go\\_for\\_a\\_ride/california\\_bicycle\\_laws/](https://www.calbike.org/go_for_a_ride/california_bicycle_laws/) provides additional details). It is often safer for pedestrians, bicyclist, and motorists, if bicycles (especially E-bikes) are ridden on the road and not on the sidewalk. The area downtown can become congested and some cyclists,

especially young riders, appear to be riding on the sidewalk because they assume it is safer. Public Works Director Loren Umbertis worked with the Town’s traffic engineering consultant David Parisi to determine if “sharrows” should be added to the roadway on Bolinas Road downtown to communicate to drivers and cyclists that bicycles and E-bikes are expected to ride in the road, not on the sidewalk. Sharrows are pavement markings in the shape of an arrow that communicate the need to share the road with bicycles. They serve a function like a crosswalk, in that they communicate where the bicycle user should travel, and they communicate to drivers that they should be aware of the user’s right of way.



Attachment B shows Mr. Parisi’s recommendation of where the sharrows should be placed. There are a total of 10, five in each direction. To accomplish sharrow installation relatively quickly, Public Works staff is looking to borrow sharrow stencils from other jurisdictions, possibly in the next two weeks, weather permitting. The Town may also add signs to existing poles that remind drivers that bicycles are allowed to take the full lane.

*Future Campaigns*

As mentioned above, MCBC has a new program, E-bike Smart Marin, currently in development, in which the Town may participate. In the future, the Town may also wish to implement a Walk Your Wheels on Side Walks Campaign either in place of or in conjunction with the Countywide Street Smarts Campaign.

Below is a sample sign placed at eye level in an Oregon jurisdiction:



**FISCAL IMPACT**

Cost of participating in the Street Smart Campaign are covered by the Town’s participation in Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). Minimal costs of the proposed Sharrow installation

will be covered by the previously approved Public Works budget. Future costs of additional campaigns should be considered in next Fiscal Year's (FY) Public Works budget.

**ATTACHMENT**

- A. E-bike safety letter from Archie Williams School Principal
- B. Sharrow map

## **Ebike Safety**

Dear Falcon Families,

We want to keep your students safe! A big part of that is working together to guide them to make good choices in so many different areas of their lives. The specific concern in this communication is safe and lawful use of ebikes.

Since the start of the school year, we have experienced a significant increase in complaints from members of the public, local business owners and motorists about the dangerous use of ebikes on paths, sidewalks and streets in our communities. We have also witnessed unsafe use of ebikes on our campuses, parking lots and athletic facilities. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, there have also been some accidents involving injury and property damage.

Ebikes are popular, convenient and environmentally friendly. They also travel at speeds up to or exceeding 25 miles per hour and don't require a license to operate. Local law enforcement agencies report that the number of citations they are issuing to students for improper and dangerous ebike use is increasing due to accidents and the risk they pose to community safety when operated irresponsibly. This issue has grown exceptionally problematic during lunch, when students often double or triple up on their ebikes with friends, ride in tandem in large groups and do not wear or buckle their helmets while pushing the limits of how far they can travel and return during the lunch period.

We are asking you to partner with us to speak to your student about the necessity of wearing a properly-fitting helmet, obeying all traffic laws and riding safely at all times. Students cited by police during school hours for unsafe behavior in the community are subject to school consequences, as well. Please see TUHSD Board Policy 5241.3 on student use of bicycles.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and, as always, for your shared concern for the safety of our students.

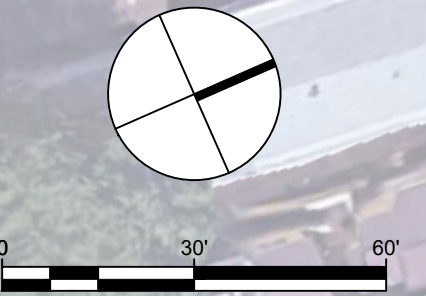
Sincerely,  
LaSandra White  
Principal  
Archie Williams High School



**PRELIMINARY**  
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION



**CONSTRUCTION NOTES (THIS SHEET ONLY)**  
 1 INSTALL WHITE SHARED ROADWAY BICYCLE MARKING



**Parisi**  
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 800 Bancroft Way, Ste 203  
 Berkeley, CA 94710  
 (510) 343-6400

DRAWN: MG      CHECKED: DP  
 DESIGNED: MG      APPROVED: DP

**TOWN OF FAIRFAX**  
**SHARED LANE USE MARKINGS**  
**BOLINAS RD. BETWEEN BROADWAY AND PARK RD.**

REVISIONS		DATE	SCALE
NO.	DESCRIPTION	10/19/2022	1" = 30'
		PTC PROJECT NO.	14018
		DRAWING	<b>P-1</b>
		SHEET NO.	<b>1 OF 1</b>