



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Gustavo J. Romo, Deputy City Manager
DATE: September 2, 2025
SUBJECT: Discussion of Helmet Ordinance

Description: Discussion regarding the potential adoption of an ordinance requiring the use of protective helmets for operators and passengers of electric bicycles (“e-bikes”) and other electric mobility devices; discussion to include whether to expand protective helmet requirements to all human-powered vehicles, such as traditional bicycles, nonmotorized scooters, skateboards, in-line skates, and roller skates.

Background and Analysis:

In recent years, the popularity of human-powered and electric-assisted devices including, but not limited to, e-bikes, e-scooters, skateboards, etcetera, has been on the rise. Although these popular devices provide an affordable, environmentally friendly, and convenient alternative to traditional vehicles, their growing use has been accompanied by increased hospital visits, reports of traffic collisions, sidewalk injuries (including traumatic brain injuries), and unsafe riding behaviors, particularly involving individuals not wearing protective gear.

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) classifies e-bikes into three categories (Class 1, 2, and 3) under Section 312.5. CVC Section 21213 requires helmets only for Class 3 operators of all ages. CVC Section 21212 provides that a person under 18 years of age may not operate a bicycle, nonmotorized scooter, skateboard, nor wear in-line or roller skates without a helmet. However, cities are permitted to enact stricter local ordinances to protect the public health, safety, and welfare under what is commonly referred to as the City’s “police power” (Article XI, Section 7 of the California Constitution). The courts have routinely upheld the ability of local governments to impose stricter safety standards where state law is silent or permissive, where the regulations do not conflict with existing state law, or when the state does not seek to fully occupy the field of regulations in a particular area.

Although this topic recently came up in relation to electric bicycle safety measures, the impacts of not wearing a helmet also apply to non-motorized devices, such as traditional bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and roller skates/blades. As such, the City Council may

give direction to include such traditional modes of transportation in a potential ordinance, if it so desires.

If enacted, the ordinance would be an exercise of the City's police power to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The City Council, therefore, has the authority to discuss extending the protective helmet safety requirements to all operators and passengers of human-powered and electric-assisted devices, including bicycles, nonmotorized scooters, skateboards, in-line skates, roller skates, electric bicycles, and electric mobility devices, regardless of age.

Fiscal Impact:

The cost to prepare this staff report is estimated at \$250.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends to pursue a helmet ordinance covering all human-powered and electric assisted mobility devices.