

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Dear Council Members, I recently learned that a City Council panel voted to advance a proposal banning e-bikes from hiking and equestrian trails. As a 70-year-old who has ridden a Class 1 electric mountain bike for the past seven years, I would like to share my perspective. When I moved to Southern California in the 1980s, mountain biking was a new activity and faced strong opposition from hiking and equestrian groups. Many of the same concerns now being raised about e-bikes were raised then about traditional mountain bikes. Over time, those concerns were addressed, and mountain biking became an accepted and valued use of our trail system. In my case, two back surgeries left me with neuropathy in my left leg, effectively ending my ability to hike or ride a traditional mountain bike. This had a significant impact on my health. In 2019, I discovered the Class 1 electric mountain bike. Because these bikes are pedal-assist only—with no throttle—they still require meaningful physical effort. My typical 90-minute ride covers about 12 miles, with an average heart rate between 75–85% of my maximum, which qualifies as vigorous exercise by the AHA. I think of my bike as a “not-so-stationary” exercise bike—one that allows me to stay active while enjoying fresh air and nature. The assist is most noticeable on steep uphill sections, helping me maintain a slow but steady pace. There is no motor assistance on downhill portions. I believe the core issue is not Class 1 e-bikes, but the increasing presence of high-speed, modified electric bikes (generally Class 2 throttle assisted e-bikes) that can reach 50–60 mph and are sometimes operated unsafely. These vehicles function more like unregulated motorcycles. In January of this year, California enacted new laws limiting motor power (max 750w / 1 horse power) and prohibiting modifications that exceed this threshold, along with clear class distinctions: - Class 1: Pedal-assist only, up to 20 mph - Class 2: Throttle-assisted, up to 20 mph - Class 3: Pedal-assist only, up to 28 mph (minimum rider age 16) Rather than broadly banning all e-bikes from trails, I urge the Council to focus on enforcing these new regulations. Many communities across the country allow Class 1 e-bikes wherever traditional bicycles are permitted. This approach promotes accessibility while maintaining safety. Class 1 e-bikes operate at speeds comparable to traditional mountain bikes and do not pose

greater risk to other trail users when ridden responsibly. For older adults and individuals with physical limitations, Class 1 e-bikes are not a convenience—they are a pathway back to health, mobility, and the outdoors. A blanket ban would unnecessarily restrict access for those who benefit most. I respectfully urge you to consider a more targeted approach that balances safety, enforcement, and inclusivity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Proposal: Allow Class 1 E-Bikes on Natural Surface Trails in the City of Los Angeles

1. Class 1 E-Bikes Align with Existing Bicycle Use in Los Angeles

Pedal-Assist Only, No Throttle:

Class 1 e-bikes require active pedaling and provide assistance only up to 20 mph. They function as bicycles—not motorized vehicles—and align with how the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks currently manages non-motorized trail use.

Comparable Environmental Impact:

Research supported by groups like the International Mountain Bicycling Association shows that Class 1 e-bikes have **no greater impact on trail surfaces** than traditional mountain bikes when used responsibly—an important consideration for LA's natural areas such as Griffith Park and Topanga State Park.

Power Within Human Range:

With limited motor output, Class 1 e-bikes primarily extend endurance on climbs rather than increasing downhill speeds, preserving the existing trail experience.

2. Expands Equitable Access to Outdoor Recreation

Supports LA's Diverse and Aging Population:

Los Angeles has a large and aging population, as well as communities with varying levels of physical ability. E-bikes enable more residents to access hilly trail systems that would otherwise be out of reach.

Advances City Equity Goals:

The City's planning frameworks—such as Los Angeles Department of Transportation mobility initiatives—emphasize equitable access to active transportation and recreation. Allowing Class 1 e-bikes directly supports these goals.

Encourages Health and Wellness:

Providing more accessible recreation options aligns with public health priorities by encouraging outdoor activity across a broader demographic.

3. Maintains Safety on Multi-Use Trails

Speed is Already Self-Regulated by Terrain:

In LA's steep and technical trail systems, terrain—not motor assistance—largely determines speed, especially on descents.

Reduced Rider Fatigue Improves Control:

E-bike riders are often less fatigued on climbs, which can lead to better decision-making and safer descending—important on high-use trails in areas like Runyon Canyon Park.

Clear Class Distinction Helps Enforcement:

Allowing Class 1 while continuing to prohibit throttle-powered or high-speed devices gives rangers and enforcement staff a practical, enforceable framework.

4. Supports Environmental and Operational Goals

Reduces Vehicle Trips to Trailheads:

In car-dependent Los Angeles, e-bikes can replace short car trips, easing congestion and parking pressure at popular trailheads.

Improves Trail Maintenance Capacity:

City staff and volunteers can use e-bikes to access remote trail sections more efficiently, particularly in large parks managed by Recreation and Parks.

Consistent Power Reduces Trail Damage:

Pedal-assist systems can reduce wheel spin on steep climbs compared to fatigued riders, helping preserve trail conditions.

5. Addresses Current Use and Enforcement Reality

E-Bikes Are Already Present in LA Parks:

Despite restrictions, Class 1 e-bikes are already in use across many Los Angeles trail systems, creating a gap between policy and practice.

Prohibition Creates Conflict, Not Compliance:

Blanket bans are difficult to enforce and can strain relationships between user groups and park staff.

Class-Based Policy Is a Proven Approach:

Many jurisdictions across California—including state-level guidance from California State Parks—differentiate access based on e-bike class, allowing for more nuanced and effective management.

Conclusion for the City of Los Angeles

Allowing Class 1 e-bikes on natural surface trails would:

- Preserve the non-motorized character of LA's trail systems
- Expand equitable access to outdoor recreation
- Support sustainability and transportation goals
- Provide a clear and enforceable regulatory framework

A Class 1-only policy represents a balanced, modern approach that reflects both current usage patterns and the City of Los Angeles' broader priorities around mobility, health, and environmental stewardship.