



CITY OF LAGUNA HILLS

City Council

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September 10, 2024

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The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California 92701

**Subject: City of Laguna Hills Response to the Orange County Grand Jury Report:
"E-bikes – Friend or Foe"**

Dear Judge Hernandez:

The City of Laguna Hills has carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations presented in the 2023-2024 Orange County Grand Jury report titled "E-bikes - Friend or Foe." We appreciate the Grand Jury's thorough investigation into the safety, regulation, and education surrounding E-bike usage within Orange County. Below, we outline our responses to the findings and recommendations as they pertain to our city.

Findings

F1: The majority of Orange County's 34 cities do not have ordinances or policies in place, which makes it difficult to address the safe operation and regulation of E-bikes, leading to confusion.

City Response: The City of Laguna Hills is not aware of the policies of the 33 other Orange County cities. While we recognize the importance of clear regulations for E-bikes, we cannot confirm the status of policies in other municipalities.

F2: Due to the increasing incidence of E-bike injuries and deaths, there is a need for consistent and accurate tracking by law enforcement and first responders, which does not exist now.

City Response: The City of Laguna Hills' experience with E-bikes does not support this finding. While we acknowledge that tracking incidents is important, our city has not observed a significant increase in E-bike-related injuries or deaths that would necessitate such measures at this time.

F3: Training and education on E-bike use and safety varies from city to city, causing confusion among bike riders.

City Response: The City of Laguna Hills is not aware of the policies in other cities but supports a consistent statewide approach to E-bike regulation, similar to the frameworks in place for electric vehicles, motorcycles, and golf carts. We believe that a uniform state-level policy would reduce confusion and promote safer E-bike use.

Recommendations

R1: Each Orange County city should have specific policies that define the rules of the road for use of E-bikes in their communities by December 1, 2024.

City Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because the City's experience with E-bikes does not warrant it. We believe that the regulation of E-bikes is a statewide issue and should be handled at that level to ensure uniformity across all jurisdictions. Having different regulations in each city would create confusion for E-bike riders who travel between cities. A consistent statewide policy, again, similar to those for electric vehicles, motorcycles, and golf carts, would be more effective and easier to enforce.

R2: Each Orange County city should have a mechanism in place to report accidents, injuries, and deaths involving E-bikes by December 1, 2024.

City Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because the City's experience with E-bikes does not support the need for such a mechanism. While the tracking of incidents is important, we believe that a statewide approach to E-bike regulation, including the collection and analysis of accident data, would be more appropriate. A uniform system at the state level would ensure that data is collected consistently and can be used to inform broader policy decisions.


R3: Each Orange County city should research and develop outreach and education programs regarding the safe operation of E-bikes for their residents by December 1, 2024.

City Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because the City's experience with E-bikes does not indicate a need for specific local outreach and education programs. We believe that E-bike safety and education should be regulated at the state level, similar to the way safety education is handled for other vehicles. A statewide approach would ensure that all residents receive consistent and accurate information, regardless of where they live or travel within California.

The City of Laguna Hills acknowledges the growing interest in E-bike usage and the associated safety concerns. However, based on our experience, we believe that E-bike regulation, including safety education and incident reporting, should be managed at the state level. A consistent statewide approach will provide clarity for E-bike riders and ensure that regulations are uniformly applied across all jurisdictions in California.

If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please contact Jarad Hildenbrand, City Manager, at (949) 707-2685 or jhildenbrand@lagunahillsca.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave Wheeler".

Dave Wheeler
Mayor

cc: Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701