

The People are the City



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City Treasurer
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City Administrator
DAMIEN R. ARRULA

401 East Chapman Avenue – Placentia, California 92870

September 17, 2024

The Honorable Maria Hernandez
Presiding Judge, Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: 2023-2024 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT ENTITLED “E-BIKES FRIEND OR FOE”

Dear Judge Hernandez:

The City of Placentia has reviewed the 2023-2024 Orange County Jury Report, “E-bikes Friend or Foe.” The report made several findings and recommendations on which the City of Placentia must comment, including Findings F1, F2, and F3, as well as recommendations R1, R2, and R3. Please consider this letter as the City’s official response to these findings.

Finding 1 (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’s Response: AGREE. The E-Bike trend is relatively new and has not been an issue for the City of Placentia until recently. However, the City has begun to receive an increase in complaints and traffic collisions involving E-bikes. The City believes creating municipal codes that specifically address the issues will reduce conflicts with motorists and pedestrians and provide a legal framework for enforcement.

Finding 2 (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’s Response: AGREE. Currently, the lack of consistent data collection hampers the efforts to understand and address the issue. Effectively implementing a unified tracking system, perhaps through the State of California, would enhance safety measures and provide valuable data for policymaking.

Finding 3 (F3): Training and education on E-bike use and safety varies from city to city causing confusion amongst bike riders.

City’s Response: AGREE. Standardizing key aspects of E-bike safety and education at a national or regional level could help mitigate the confusion amongst the public when it comes to E-bike laws and safety. Collaboration between cities to share best practices and resources could also enhance overall safety for E-bike users. The City will increase the amount of information we post on social media, including informational videos and traffic safety information, to educate the public on the laws and safe operation of e-bikes.

Recommendation 1 (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's Response: This recommendation has not yet been implemented and will require further analysis. The City of Placentia will have to create new municipal codes to address the specific issues that E-bikes are causing in the community. The City will work with its City Attorney's Office on this to draft appropriate language for the new code. The City will also collaborate with surrounding agencies to determine their plan to address the current issues.

Recommendation 2 (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's Response: This recommendation has been implemented. Under California law, an E-bike is essentially treated the same as a standard bicycle—with a few exceptions. E-bikes are to be operated like conventional bicycles in California and are not considered "motor vehicles" under the California Vehicle Code. Under Placentia Police Department Policy 501.4.5, which addresses traffic collisions on roadways, a traffic collision report shall be taken when a collision occurs on a highway or private property within the jurisdiction of this department, which involves any injury or death to any person involved in the collision. The State Traffic Collision Report form already has a box that allows agencies to track collisions involving E-bikes. The traffic collision statistical data is retrievable through the California Statewide Integrated Traffic Record System (SWITERS). The City will also explore altering our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) / Records Management System (RMS) to expand our data collection to include enforcement efforts incidents involving E-bikes.

Recommendation 3 (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's Response: This recommendation will be implemented by December 1, 2024. The Placentia Police Department has received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety for DUI enforcement. We will be able to utilize some of the funds to conduct outreach to students regarding current traffic laws associated with E-bikes and the safe operation of E-bikes within the community. The City will also create videos for social media, YouTube, and the City's cable channel, which will contain information on the safe operation of E-Bikes. Cities with more funding and resources might offer more comprehensive training or educational programs compared to smaller cities with limited budgets.

Thank you for giving the City this opportunity to comment on the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. Should you have any questions or need clarification regarding the City's responses, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,


Jeremy B. Yamaguchi
Mayor, City of Placentia

cc: Placentia City Council
Damien R. Arrula, City Administrator
Orange County Grand Jury