



Seattle Parks & Recreation

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 6, 2018

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Christopher Williams, Interim Superintendent

Subject: Multi-use Trail Pilot Project

Requested Board Action

Washington State recently passed a law which defined and established statewide regulations for electric bicycles (e-bikes) as their use becomes more common. At the same time, Seattle Parks and Recreation has received inquiries from the public, elected officials, and other local jurisdictions that are exploring how to address the growing use and availability of e-bikes. These discussions have focused on the regulations for e-bike usage on multi-use trails and the safety of operating these bikes on shared use trails such as the Burke-Gilman, Elliot Bay, Mountains to Sound, Melrose Connector, and Duwamish Trails. We will be providing an informational briefing on this issue at the April 12 Park Board meeting, which will be followed by a public hearing on April 26 and possible vote on a proposed pilot project on May 10. The goal is to have regulations in place for e-bikes on Seattle Parks and Recreation multi-use trails by Memorial Day to prepare for the busy summer biking season.

Project or Policy Description and Background

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) proposes a pilot project to allow Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles on five of the multi-use trails we manage: Burke-Gilman Trail, Elliott Bay Trail, Mountains to Sound Trail, Melrose Connector Trail, and Duwamish Trail. These trails were chosen due to the width of the trails, the commuting connections they provide, and their ability to safely accommodate e-bikes. The pilot would include a speed limit of 15 mph on these trails, although there will be areas where riders need to reduce speed, for all users and an education campaign in partnership with the Seattle Department of Transportation.

Seattle has changed significantly since 1995, when Seattle Parks and Recreation passed a Bicycle Use policy (060-P 7.11.1) that banned all motorized vehicles on multiuse trails. The population has risen dramatically over the last 28 years (150,000 more people), bicycle use has increased on streets and trails (up 100% since 1985), electric bike technology has advanced, and there is now access to a number of bike share programs including e-bikes.

According to the NDP Group, e-bike sales are up more than 450% since 2013. A new study and the largest research study of its kind in North America, "A North American Survey of Electric Bicycle Owners," measures how people are using their e-bikes and how they feel about them. The outcomes are promising for a continued rise in e-bike ownership and usage. [Study findings](#) include: e-bike owners ride farther and more often, replace more car trips, e-bikes eliminate

barriers to bicycling (hills made easier, distances were considered too far before using an e-bike, avoidance of arriving sweaty to a destination, and the ability to carry cargo or children), and 96% of respondents shared e-bicycling is fun.

Earlier this year, Washington State passed a bill to define and regulate electric bicycles ([SB 6434](#)). It establishes three classifications for electric-assisted bicycles: Class 1 e-bikes are activated when pedaled, Class 2 have an independent throttle, and both have motors that are 750 watts or less and stop assisting at 20 mph. Class 3 e-bikes are pedal assist like Class 1 bikes, but can assist up to 28 mph. The law allows for Class 1 and 2 electric-assisted bicycles on shared use paths, although local laws can supersede this rule.

Currently Seattle's multi-use trails cross multiple jurisdictions with inconsistent regulations. The Burke-Gilman Trail is managed by Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), University of Washington (UW), and King County (KC) beyond the city boundaries. The Elliott Bay and Duwamish Trails are managed by SPR, SDOT, the Port of Seattle. The Mountains to Sound Trail in Seattle is managed by SPR, SDOT, and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), while the Melrose Connector Trail is managed by SPR and WSDOT. King County has a "reasonable and prudent" speed limit, whereby speeds in excess of 15 mph "constitute in evidence a prima facie presumption of violating" the regulation, while Seattle has no speed limit and the Port has 5 mph speed limits in some areas. Users are uncertain of the rules of the trail and often comment with questions and concerns.

To create consistency with the state legislation and across the relevant jurisdictions, SPR brought key staff together to share regulations, plans, and concerns. The SPR Multi-use Trail Pilot Project aligns with the intent and desire of managers from the other agencies and organizations, elected officials, addresses comments heard in our last briefing with the Park Board, and is consistent with state law.

Public Involvement Process

The Board of Park Commissioners briefings, and the public hearing will be the public review process for the Multi-use Trail Pilot Project, followed by a year of outreach and engagement with the public, including key stakeholders.

Issues for Discussion

What we've heard:

- **Speed:** Many people, particularly pedestrians and family cyclists, are very concerned about fast cyclists and the danger it poses to other users. There is no regulatory speed limit for bikes on most multi-use trails in Seattle, few signs to set expectations, and limited enforcement.
- **Technology:** Electric bike technology has increased rapidly and with it the use of e-bikes for people of all abilities. As is common with new technology, some people are concerned with the rise in popularity of e-bikes, and equate them with speeding cyclists. Others point out that e-bikes are generally designed to stop assisting riders at 20 mph and making cycling accessible to more people. Studies show that there is speed a difference of 0-5 mph between a traditional bike and an e-bike. The new state classification system for e-bikes creates some clarity around this new technology.

- **Safety:** The predominant concern we hear, from the public and key stakeholders, is for the safety of all users. There are adjacent home owners that must cross the trails regularly, pedestrians that feel unsafe in congested areas and with fast cyclists, and recreational cyclists that have concerns with racing bikes. These users generally ask for speed limits, physical infrastructure changes, and increased enforcement.
- **Clarity:** Many people are frustrated with the inconsistency in regulations across jurisdictions on the same trail, and the lack of clear signs to set expectations. They would like clarity on the rules of the trail.
- **Equity:** Much of the literature on e-bikes and many advocates in the community highlight how e-bikes offer access to cycling for seniors and people with disabilities. As such, they provide access to recreational opportunities and healthy lifestyles for a broad range of people. The growing appeal of e-bikes among older adults is allowing for health and wellness into later years, as e-bicycling for transportation and recreation results in stronger heart rates, lower blood sugar and reduced body fat.

Evaluation Process

During the pilot year, Seattle Parks and Recreation will collect data in the following ways: bike counters, field observations and on-site surveys, stakeholder focus groups, and public feedback through an online survey, emails and correspondence. This information will help us understand use patterns, safety concerns, and pilot outcomes. Following the collection of this data, Seattle Parks and Recreation will evaluate potential options and provide a policy recommendation to the Board of Park Commissioners.

Parks Board Input

- What community stakeholders should we engage as part of this pilot?
- What additional data would you like to see analyzed to assess the pilot project?

Parks Board Action

Public hearing (4/26) and vote (5/10) to allow for implementation of pilot project in time for summer.

Environmental Sustainability

The Multi-use Trail Pilot Project supports the City's climate initiative and SPR's Healthy Environment Action Agenda by encouraging more cycling around the city, thus reducing carbon emissions.

Budget

Implementation of the trail pilot will primarily utilize existing SPR resources, including stakeholder coordination, communications and outreach. We will be partnering with SDOT for trail signage and an education campaign, highlighting trail etiquette and safety along the trails.

SPR plans to conduct surveys of trail users and other stakeholders throughout the pilot. The intent is to work with students or interns, keeping the cost low. Bike counters and other passive data gathering will happen in partnership with SDOT.

Schedule



Preparation for the Multi-use Trail Pilot Project has already begun with trail management stakeholder engagement and policy review. The intent is to plan the educational campaign and signs in April and May along with key stakeholder engagement. The pilot would begin on Memorial Day weekend with media outreach and installation of signs. Throughout the summer and fall an education campaign and user surveys would continue public engagement on the pilot. A final survey, evaluation, and report will be prepared after the year-long pilot and be presented to the Superintendent and Board of Park Commissioners in the spring/summer of 2019. Seattle Parks and Recreation would then prepare a policy recommendation to the Board in the summer of 2019.

Additional Information

Todd Burley, Sustainability Strategic Advisor, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Todd.burley@seattle.gov, 206-256-5615

www.seattle.gov/parks/environment

Attachments

- 10/19/17 Memo to Board of Park Commissioners
- Seattle Parks and Recreation Bicycle Use Policy (1995)
- King County Trail Code
- SDOT Trail Signs
- East Bay Parks E-bike Pilot Sign
- Superintendent's Authority



Memo

Date: October 9, 2017
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susan Golub, Manager, Policy Unit
Subject: Allowing Electric Bicycles on the Burke-Gilman Trail

Requested Board Action

There has been community and some City Councilmember interest in allowing electric-assist bicycles on Parks and Recreation's paved trails, specifically the Burke-Gilman Trail. Currently electric wheelchairs are the only electric powered use allowed. Staff is asking the Board for a recommendation about whether electric bicycles should be allowed on the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Background: The State of Washington has a specific definition for an electric-assist bicycle: the pedals must turn and the electric engine is limited to less than 1,000 watts and a maximum speed on a flat surface of 20 miles per hour. (See: http://www.wsp.wa.gov/traveler/docs/equipmt/elect_bicycle.pdf) The term electric-assist would *not* apply to electric scooters, motorcycles, Segways, electric skateboards or any of the new self-balancing electric people-movers.

While currently prohibited by the Park Code, there is a small population currently riding electric-assist bicycles on the Burke-Gilman Trail. We don't have any means of enforcing the prohibition against electric bikes on trails, nor enforcement of the existing rule that requires all bicyclists to travel at a "reasonable" speed (there is no set speed limit on the Burke-Gilman Trail).

Pros: Reasons to allow electric-assist bicycles on paved trails:

- **Promotes healthy exercise:** Some people may not be able to ride a bike at all without the boost of electricity to get them up Seattle hills. Permitting paved trail use may keep active those who otherwise might be sedentary.
- **Small engine size restricts speed:** Because of the engine size limit and speed restriction, electric-assist bicycles can't go superfast: the 20 miles per hour limit of the engine is slower than many of the commuters and bike racers on the Burke-Gilman Trail.
- **Code and Use Consistency:** Since there is virtually no enforcement of the ban on electric-assist bicycles, and the use appears to be policing itself well (we haven't had complaints of scooters or motorcycles on the trail), changing the Code to permit the use legitimizes what is already happening.

Cons: Reasons not to support allowing electric-assist bicycles on paved trails:

- **Could be counter to our mission of healthy people:** Does changing the Park Code provide a means to ride a bike when you can't navigate hills? Or does it give people an out from exercise and pumping or walking a bike uphill? The answer is probably both.
- **Adds potential for more pedestrian-bike conflicts:** Even at a maximum speed of 20 M.P.H., the pedestrian loses in a collision with a bicycle. Pedestrians already feel at risk on the Burke-Gilman Trail, as do many recreational bicyclists. Do we want to encourage more potential conflicts?

- Why change what seems to be working: Since there is no active enforcement of the ban on electric-assist bicycles, and the use seems to be limited, what can of worms might we be opening by going through the public process of changing the Code?

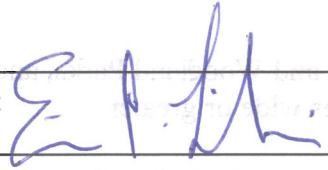
Next Steps: If the Park Board is interested in further discussion regarding allowing electric bikes on the Burke-Gilman Trail, the next step is to schedule a public hearing before the Board on the issue.

Additional Information

Susan Golub: susan.golub@seattle.gov



Department Policy & Procedure

Subject: Bicycle Use	Number	060-P 7.11.1
	Effective	August 25, 1995
	Supersedes	
Approved: 	Department: Parks and Recreation	Page 1 of 3

PREFACE

This policy has been developed because bicycling on park roads, trails, and within park areas has become an extremely popular recreational activity. The increasing use of mountain bicycles has created a need to develop management policies to reduce conflicts with other park users and reduce negative impacts on park resources. Sensitive natural areas, such as: Ravenna, Carkeek, Woodland Park, Seward, Schmitz, Washington Park Arboretum, Waterfront Trail, Camp Long, Discovery Park, and Interlaken have been damaged by excessive bicycle use and must be protected.

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To establish a policy for responsible bike use in Seattle Parks system.

2.0 ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED

2.1 Department of Parks and Recreation

3.0 REFERENCES

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Bicycles will be allowed in Seattle parks on roads and paths designed for shared use (60 inches in width), or where high use will not adversely impact sensitive environments.

4.2 All bicycles are prohibited off roads and paths in environmentally sensitive or natural areas within Seattle parks such as wetlands, streams, meadows, newly forested sites or steep slopes where bicycle use could cause damage to plants, soils, streams or natural elements of the park land.

4.3 Bicycle use is prohibited in Camp Long.

- 4.4 Bicycles will be operated at a safe speed, especially when passing other users, and in a responsible manner as determined by Department staff. The code of behavior or conduct contained in this policy is required of all wheeled device operators using Seattle park lands.
- 4.5 Bicycles are restricted to paved surfaces only at Discovery Park, Schmitz Park, and in the Washington Park Arboretum.
- 4.6 Bicycle use in Ravenna, Carkeek, Seward, Interlaken, Lincoln and Woodland Parks, and in natural areas and greenbelts will be restricted to trails 60 inches wide or greater.
- 4.7 Bicycle riding is restricted from docks, floats and connecting ramps, including the Arboretum Waterfront Trail, because of danger to the bicyclist as well as the general public using those facilities, and deterioration of the waterfront wood chip trail surface.
- 4.8 The Superintendent has the discretion to designate specific trails as either limited to pedestrian use only or allowed for pedestrian and bicycle use, regardless of trail width. The Superintendent can only do so after public review by the Park Board.
- 4.9 This policy is not intended to prohibit the use of wheelchairs by disabled persons or strollers anywhere in parks. Bicycle users may dismount and walk bicycles on established trails where bicycle use is prohibited.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Bicycles or any wheeled, non-motorized device which is operator-propelled and transports the operator on land. Examples include, but are not limited to bicycles (mountain bicycles), tricycles, quadcycles, and scooters.

- 5.2 Bicyclist Code of Behavior: Sections of the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA) in their "Off-Road Cyclist's Code":

Always yield the right of way - even if, at times, it seems inconvenient.

Pass with care - let others know of your presence well in advance.

Stay on permitted trails - riding cross-country damages the landscape.

Control your speed - safe speeds are relative to the terrain and your experience as a rider.

Don't litter - pack out what you pack in.

Other guidelines are:

Ride within your capabilities.

Walk your bike in congested areas.

Obey bicycle and other regulatory signs.

Supervise and instruct youngsters in the proper techniques of cycling.

6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of all Department of Parks and Recreation staff to monitor and ensure these policies are carried out. Each affected Director will assign staff to inspect impacted parks and recommend appropriate actions to the Superintendent including closure of an area or park.
- 6.2 The Park Resource Managers are responsible to have signs made and installed as needed, to control and direct bicycle use in parks.
- 6.3 The Recreation Information Office will keep a log of complaints involving bicycles and report to Park Resource Managers particular problems and trends.
- 6.4 Prior to closing any new park or trails to bicycle use, the Superintendent will notify the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, the Seattle area mountain bicycle clubs and interested community groups. Also, the Park Board will hold a public hearing prior to the Superintendent taking such action.
- 6.5 It is the responsibility of the Engineering and Design section to prepare a bicycle use sign manual with layouts for standard signs. The warehouse shall stock an inventory of standard bicycle use signs.

King County Trail Code

V. "Motor vehicle" means any self-propelled device capable of being moved upon a road, and in, upon or by which any persons or property may be transported or drawn, and shall include, but not be limited to, automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, motor scooters, jeeps or similar type four-wheel drive vehicles and snowmobiles, whether or not they can be legally operated upon the public highways.

FF. "Trail" means any path, track or right-of-way designed for use by pedestrians, bicycles, equestrians or other nonmotorized modes of transportation.

7.12.260 Motor vehicles on roads and trails. No person shall operate any motor vehicle on a trail in any King County park area unless such trail has been specifically designated and posted for such use. No person shall operate a motor vehicle within the boundaries of a King County park area except on roads, streets, highways, parking lots, parking areas, or where otherwise permitted by proper posting. Through traffic is not permitted within the boundaries of any King County park or open space, except for two roads through Petrovitsky park, if due to the topography, surrounding development patterns, and road networks, the two roads provide the only feasible access to the 4 to 1 Project known as McGarvey Park.

Provided that:

This section shall not apply to emergency vehicles, maintenance vehicles, or construction vehicles authorized by the department. (Ord. 12827 § 2, 1997: Ord. 12003 § 7, 1995: Ord. 8166 § 3, 1987: Ord. 6798 § 26, 1984).

7.12.270 Motor vehicles - speed limits. No person shall drive a motor vehicle within any King County park area at a speed greater than twenty-five miles per hour or as otherwise posted, having due regard for traffic on, and the surface and width of the road, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons, property, or wildlife; provided, however, that in no event shall a vehicle be driven at a speed greater than fifteen miles per hour in camp, picnic, utility, or headquarters areas, or in areas of general public assemblage. (Ord. 6798 § 27, 1984).

7.12.295 Trail use.

A. No person shall travel on a trail at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions and having regard to the actual and potential hazards then existing. In every event, speed shall be so controlled as may be necessary to avoid colliding with others who are complying with the law and using reasonable care. Travel at speeds in excess of 15 miles per hour shall constitute in evidence a prima facie presumption that the person violated this section.

B. No person shall travel on a trail in a negligent manner. For the purposes of this section "travel on a trail in a negligent manner" shall be construed to mean any form of travel on a trail in such a manner as to endanger or be likely to endanger any persons or property.

C. For the purposes of this section "travel" shall be construed to include all forms of movement or transportation on a trail, including but not limited to foot, bicycle, horse, skateboard, and roller skates.

D. Every person traveling on a trail shall obey the instructions of any official traffic control device applicable thereto placed in accordance with applicable laws unless otherwise directed by a police officer.

E. No motorized vehicles shall be allowed on King County trails. For the purposes of this section "motorized vehicles" means any form of transportation powered by an internal combustion or electric motor. This includes but is not limited to automobiles, golf carts, mopeds, motor scooters, and motorcycles. This section shall not apply to wheelchairs powered by electric motors, or authorized maintenance, police or emergency vehicles.

F. Regional trails, local trail corridors, and paved pathways are open to all non-motorized users unless otherwise designated and posted. Pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians are permitted on all maintained soft surface trails unless otherwise posted and designated. Trail restrictions may be posted at park entrances, trailheads or, in some cases, on individual trails. Trail use designations will be based on the park master plan, resource conservation, trail user conflicts, maintenance issues, and safety hazards.

G. Every person who shall use or travel on a trail shall obey the Model Trail User Code of Conduct.

H. Model Trail User Code of Conduct

1. USING A TRAIL. Every person using a trail shall stay as near to the right side of the trail as is safe, excepting those movements necessary to prepare to make or make turning movements, or while overtaking and passing another user moving in the same direction.

2. REGARD FOR OTHER TRAIL USERS. Every user shall exercise due care and caution to avoid colliding with any other trail user. All users shall travel in a consistent and predictable manner.

3. GROUPS ON TRAIL. No group of trail users, including their animal(s), shall occupy more than one half of the trail as measured from the right side, so as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of trail users.

4. AUDIBLE SIGNAL WHEN PASSING. Every user shall give an audible warning signal before passing another trail user. The signal must be produced in such a manner as to allow adequate time for response. The signal may be given by voice, bell or horn.

5. OVERTAKING TRAIL USERS ON THE LEFT. Any trail user overtaking another trail user proceeding in the same direction shall pass to the left of such overtaken user at a safe distance, and shall stay to the left until safely clear of the overtaken user.

6. ENTERING AND CROSSING TRAIL. Trail users entering or crossing the trail at uncontrolled points shall yield to traffic on the trail.

7. LIGHTS ON TRAIL USERS. All bicyclists using the trail from one-half hour before sunset to one-half hour before sunrise shall equip their bicycles with a headlight visible 500 feet to the front, and a red or amber light visible 500 feet to the rear.

8. REGARD FOR EQUESTRIAN USERS ON TRAIL. Trail users shall exercise extreme caution to prevent frightening horses with sudden noise or movement and shall always yield right of way to horses and warn equestrian users when approaching from behind and attempting to pass.

9. REGARD FOR ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS. Trail users should respect private lands adjacent to county trails and should stay on trails to avoid trespassing on or interfering with adjacent private property. (Ord. 12003 § 8, 1995; Ord. 8518 § 1, 1988).

USE VOICE

OR BELL

WHEN

PASSING



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SAFER STREETS FOR SEATTLE



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

ALL INTERSECTIONS
ARE CROSSWALKS



Stop for me!

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USE LIGHT AT NIGHT



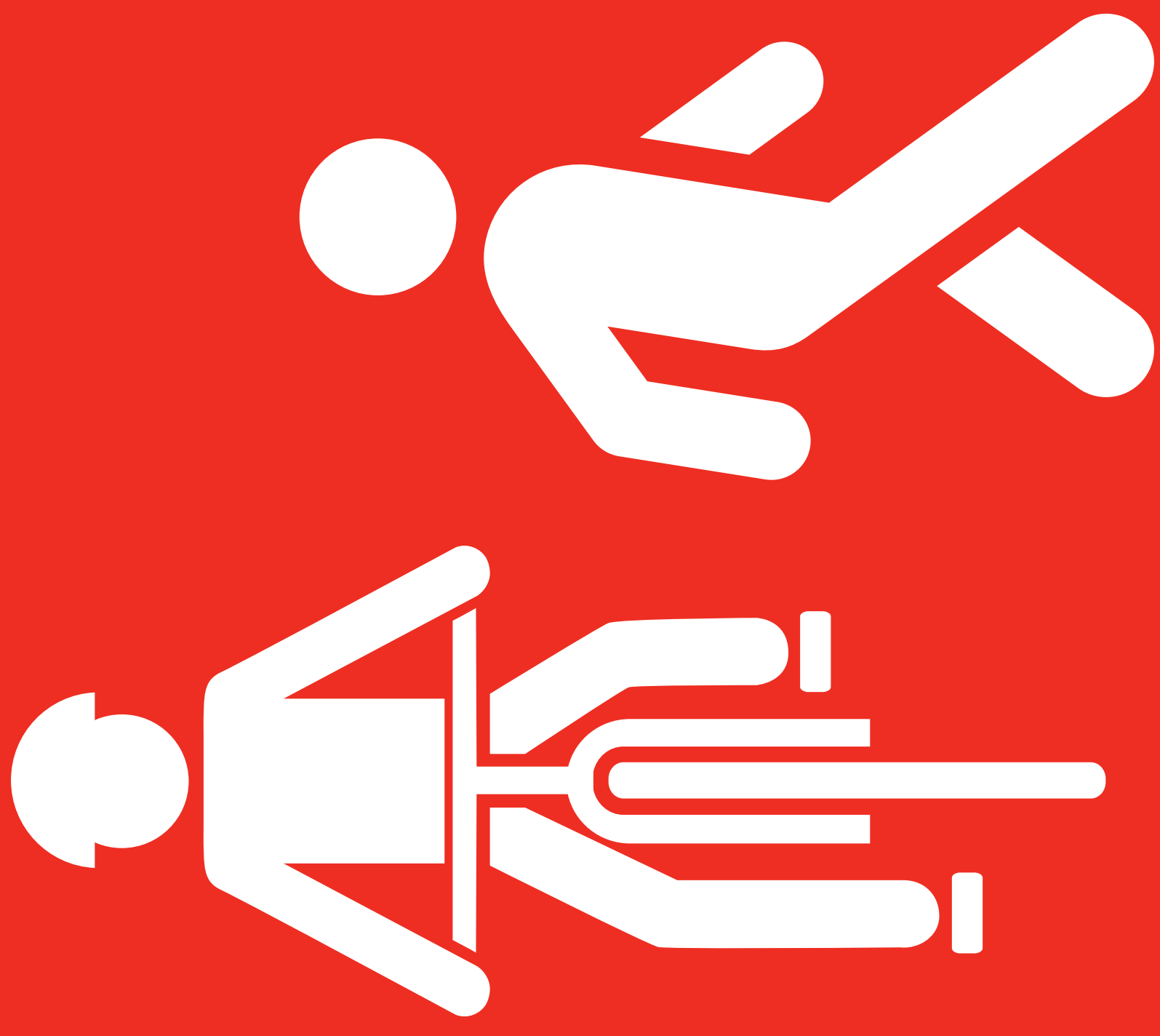
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BIKES, TRISTRIANS YIELDED TO PEDESTRIANS



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KEEP SAFE,

WATCH

YOUR

PACE



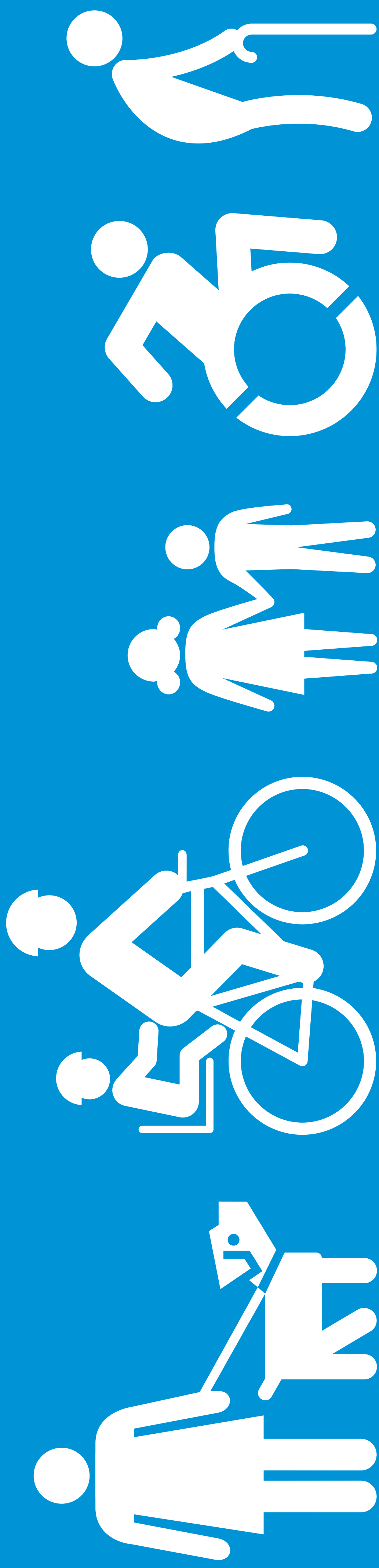
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TRAILS ARE FOR EVERYONE



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ELECTRIC BICYCLE PILOT PROGRAM

September 2017 - September 2018

**Only On Approved
EBRPD Paved Regional Trails:**

- Alameda Creek Regional Trail
- Contra Costa Canal Regional Trail
- Iron Horse Regional Trail



Type I & II E-Bikes Only

Maximum 15 MPH Speed Limit For All Bikes

For More Information Contact: (510) 544-3021

East Bay 
Regional Park District
www.ebparks.org



Seattle Parks and Recreation Authority

From the Park Administrative Code

18.12.040 - Superintendent's authority—Rulemaking—Enforcement.

The Superintendent shall have the power to enforce the provisions of this chapter.

The Superintendent may, in accordance with the Administrative Code, [\[2\]](#) adopt, amend and rescind rules and regulations consistent with this Park Code in order to manage and control the park and recreation system of the City including rules that:

- A. Clarify, interpret or apply this Park Code;
- B. Regulate the use of parks;
- C. Regulate conduct in parks;
- D. Designate restricted areas in parks;
- E. Regulate recreation programs;
- F. Establish times for opening and closing of any particular park or park facility to public use and/or for entry or use by motor vehicles;
- G. Restrict and/or prohibit the use of any skateboard, roller skate, coaster or other similar device in any park or part of a park. This prohibition shall not apply to a person with a disability, who uses wheeled equipment in order to be ambulatory. Before exercising this authority, the Superintendent shall hold a public hearing in conjunction with the Board of Park Commissioners and receive their advice and recommendations. It is City policy that restrictions or prohibitions on the use of such recreational equipment on a surface that is paved or improved for travel be imposed only to the extent appropriate to preserve the park from damage and/or avoid impairing the use and enjoyment of the park by others; and
- H. Impose a speed limit on use of any or all park paths, trails and walks, improved and unimproved. Such speed limit may apply to pedestrians and/or those persons using roller skates, skateboards, coasters, bicycles, carts, or any similar device or conveyance.

(Ord. [117645](#) § 2, 1995: Ord. [116893](#) § 1, 1993: Ord. [116737](#) § 1, 1993: Ord. [113436](#) § 2, 1987: Ord. [106615](#) § 4, 1977.)

18.12.200 - Use of driveways and boulevards—Speed limit.

It is unlawful to ride, propel, drive or direct any animal or motorized vehicle over or through any park except along and upon the park drives, parkways and park boulevards, or to do so at a speed in excess of the posted speed limit, or to do so in excess of fifteen (15) miles per hour where no speed limit is posted.

(Ord. [109078](#) § 1(part), 1980: Ord. [108935](#) § 1(part), 1980: Ord. [108379](#) § 1(part), 1979: Ord. [106615](#) § 12(a), 1977.)