



SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES

July 6, 2022

Director Brigitte Shearer and Commissioners
Belmont Department of Parks and Recreation
30 Twin Pines Lane
Belmont, CA 94002

Re: Draft Open Space Management Plan and Belmont PROS Master Plan
Electric Powered Bicycle Policy

The recently released Belmont Draft Open Space Management Plan June 2022, submitted by WRA Inc. contains a statement about the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) e-bike policy that requires correction:

*Pg 43. "More recently, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) -which does not allow e-bikes on trails - commissioned a set of studies to investigate visitor perceptions and ecological impacts of e-bikes. **A report on these studies to the Board of Directors submitted in March, 2022 included a recommendation that e-bikes be allowed wherever bikes were allowed (Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, 2022), however, the matter remains under consideration by the District at the time of this report writing.**"*

At their June 29, 2022 meeting, the MidPen Board of Directors voted to **uphold its ban on e-bikes on the great majority of its trails**. They did approve class 1 and 2 e-bike access on 6.5 miles of improved (paved or wide hardened) trails in Rancho San Antonio Preserve in Cupertino and Ravenswood Preserve (Bay Trail) in East Palo Alto. This policy conforms with that of other open space entities that allow bikes in general only on paved roads and former ranch and logging roads.

The decision of MidPen was based on an exhaustive [two-year policy review](#) that included extensive surveys of users and other agency policies and looked at the potential impacts of allowing e-bikes on its nature preserves. The study assessed noise impacts to nearby bat populations, potentially excessive uphill speeds, fire risk, soil and vegetation impacts, and the potential for conflicts among e-bikers and other visitors.

In May 2022, the Sierra Club's National Board of Directors updated its national bicycle policy and unanimously restated our stance that electric bicycles are powered vehicles and as such should not be granted access to natural areas. The Club does not limit its powered bicycle opposition to dirt trails but to *all trails* in natural protected areas. These vehicles are transportation vehicles and should only be deployed as such. When used in the transportation

mode they speed at the highest speed the operator is confident with. They do not proceed at a relaxed pace nor are they likely to do so in natural areas.

If Belmont wishes to permit electric bicycles on trails, the Sierra Club strongly urges they include class 1 and 2 e-bikes only, and that all bikes be limited to wider roads with hardened surfaces. to ensure user safety and prevent damage to trails and natural habitat. Where bikes are allowed, there should be a 15-mph speed limit (5 mph on blind curves), and strictly enforced policies against racing, and damaging practices such as off-trail use, "walling", "roosting" and jumping.

- Enforcement should be accomplished via use of cameras.
- Three violations should result in the trail being shut down until damaged sections have been restored.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on this Draft Open Space Management Plan, and hope that Belmont will continue notifying the community to enhance stewardship with the goals of preserving habitat, species, and equitable access.

Sincerely,



Gladwyn d'Souza
Conservation Committee Chair
Loma Prieta Chapter Sierra Club

Cc:

James Eggers
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