



DATE: April 27, 2016

AGENDA ITEM # 4

TO: Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Commission
FROM: Cedric Novenario, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Municipal Code – Bicycle Riding on Sidewalks

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and discuss bicycle riding restrictions on sidewalks from the Municipal Code Subcommittee

BACKGROUND

At the March 23, 2016 BPAC meeting, the subcommittee provided a final report regarding their work on reviewing pertinent sections of the Los Altos Municipal Code regarding bicycles and pedestrians.

DISCUSSION

A major recommendation from the subcommittee was to consider restricting bicycle riding on sidewalks, below is an excerpt from the subcommittee’s final report:

“The subcommittee discussed restricting bicycle riding on sidewalks because riders frequently fail to yield to pedestrians or to warn pedestrians of their approach. Thus their presence is may startle or discourage some people from walking, or may result near misses and collisions. There are few sidewalks in town, so regulation would have a minor impact on riders, and that riders can always walk their bicycles on the sidewalk - for example, when approaching school. It was also noted that all neighboring cities, and others whose code we looked at, have restrictions on bicycle riding on sidewalks – most commonly bans on riding bicycles on sidewalks in commercial areas. Similar restrictions for skateboard riders, skaters, etc were also discussed.

Various limitations on bicycle riding on sidewalks were considered including banning bicycles on all sidewalks (the simplest) or banning it in selected areas, e.g. public sidewalks in commercial zones, and perhaps also along some connector streets such as San Antonio Road, where long blocks encourage speed. Possible restrictions based on rider age/size, speed, or time of day were mentioned. A more conservative

version for Los Altos would be to ban bicycle riding along El Camino Real, and would be consistent with Palo Alto and Mountain View regulations.”

Some municipalities restrict bicycle riding on sidewalks in downtown or central business districts, such as Palo Alto. These are areas where there is an expectation for high pedestrian volumes. While other agencies, such as Pleasanton, allow bicycle riding on sidewalks on roads that do not have adequate bike facilities for riders aged 8-80.

Downtown Los Altos and El Camino Real are two locations where pedestrian activity is expected. However, these also are areas where road bicycle facilities are minimal and/or not currently feasible. Pedestrian activity adjacent to schools is also expected. For less experienced riders and parents, riding on the sidewalk provides a comfort level that feels safer to them than riding in the road.

However, riding on the sidewalk presents pedestrian safety concerns regarding pedestrians-cyclist accidents. There have been 3 pedestrian-bicycle related injury accidents over the past three years:

- 2014- 1, accident occurred in crosswalk near Rancho Shopping Center
- 2015- 1, accident occurred in crosswalk near Foothill Crossings Shopping Center
- 2015 – 1, accident occurred in walkway on Homestead Road

This is not an overwhelming number of accidents. However, the discussion regarding riding restrictions on sidewalks is worth having.