



E-Bike Policies, Pilot Programs and General Information



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When **electric road and electric mountain bicycles** were first introduced, most local, regional and national park and open space agencies categorized them as motorized vehicles, which, like traditional motorcycles and scooters, meant they were prohibited from use on trails. Similarly, the 2014 Land Use Regulations (R-14-06) update by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Board of Directors only allow the possession or use of e-bikes on trails if the trail is designated for such use (Section 409.9).

E-bike manufacturers have since classified e-bikes into three categories, which have been adopted by 22 states, including California. Incorporated into the California Vehicle Code in 2016, this classification system places strict requirements on e-bike design and capabilities, creating a distinction between an electric bicycle and motorized bicycles/mopeds.

Midpen land use regulations only allow the possession or use of e-bikes on specific trails designated for such use (Section 409.9). Violation of this regulation is subject to citation.

- Recent “no e-bike” signs on Midpen trails clarify existing status quo regulations.
- Beginning in December 2020, certain paved and improved trails that allow bicycle use at Ravenswood and Rancho San Antonio preserves will be designated for e-bike use as part of a one-year pilot study.
- The board will consider options for a potential second pilot study for e-bike use on select designated unpaved trails in the upcoming fiscal year (which runs from July 2021–June 2022).
- The board will continue to evaluate e-bike access through a **public process** with the goal of thoughtful, responsible management that remains true to the Midpen mission *to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space lands in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide ecologically-sensitive opportunities for public enjoyment and education.*
- E-bikes are allowed for people with mobility disabilities on trails where bicycles are allowed, per Midpen’s Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices policy.

Section 312.5 of the California Vehicle Code defines an e-bike as having fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts:

- A “**class 1 electric bicycle,**” or “**low-speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle,**” is a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.
- A “**class 2 electric bicycle,**” or “**low-speed throttle-assisted electric bicycle,**” is a bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle, and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.
- A “**class 3 electric bicycle,**” or “**speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle,**” is a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour, and equipped with a speedometer.

California Vehicle Code Section 21207.5 (b) prohibits the use of class 3 e-bikes on recreational trails and paths, unless the public agency with jurisdiction chooses to permit them. It also allows public agencies to prohibit class 1 and 2 e-bikes on trails within the agency’s jurisdiction.

With recent changes to e-bike definitions under the California Vehicle Code and growing e-bike use (mostly class 1), many agencies, including Midpen are reviewing e-bikes policies and evaluating the compatibility of this use within their jurisdictions based on their mission and goals.



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Background

At its November 20, 2019, public meeting, the Midpen board began considering options for designating specific trails, paved and unpaved, as open to specific classes of e-bikes. After hearing public comments from many sides of the issue, the board voted unanimously for staff to evaluate and propose options for implementing a **one-year pilot program** for class 1 e-bikes on select unpaved trails. This pilot program will yield data for analyzing the potential effects to the natural resources, visitor experience, trail maintenance and regulations enforcement on Midpen lands. Due to the tremendous staff resources needed to address unprecedented COVID-19 urgencies, ensure that preserves remain safely open to the public during the pandemic and manage a two-fold increase in visitation, this work is currently scheduled to begin next fiscal year (July 2021 to June 2022).

At its June 10, 2020 public board meeting, the board further directed staff to develop and present a proposal by July 2021 for a one-year pilot program allowing class 1 and 2 e-bikes on designated paved and improved trails at two specific preserves:

- Ravenswood Preserve given the recent opening of a new **Ravenswood Bay Trail** segment that connects **80 miles** of continuous San Francisco Bay Trail and creates a significant opportunity for a **bicycle commute corridor** connecting residents to employment centers between Menlo Park and Santa Clara, and out to Newark and Fremont.
- Rancho San Antonio Preserve given multimodal transportation goals to encourage **alternative modes of transportation** at one of the region's most-visited preserves that lies in close proximity to numerous cities and communities.

At its August 12, 2020, public board meeting, the board approved the one-year **pilot for e-bikes on paved and improved trails** at these two preserves. The pilot program is scheduled to launch in December 2020.



Given an increase in public inquiries regarding policies on the use of e-bikes, indicating a confusion as to where e-bikes are allowed, Midpen has posted **"no e-bike" signs** where appropriate to provide clarity at Midpen trailheads. The newly posted signs simply call out current status quo policy while the board in the upcoming year considers new information as well as public comments as they evaluate pilot program options for allowing e-bike use on unpaved trails.



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