




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director 
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: November 26, 2018

SUBJECT: Trails Pilot Program

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) intends to implement a pilot program associated with electric bikes and electric scooters on specific PARD maintained trails. This pilot program will be conducted in partnership with the Public Works Department (PWD), the Austin Transportation Department (ATD), and the Law Department. The pilot will start in December, 2018, and run approximately nine months through the fall of 2019. The results of the pilot program will help craft recommendations related to potential Code changes associated with Title 8: Parks and Recreation.

History

The City of Austin's strategic direction includes a mobility goal of getting us where we want to go, when we want to get there, safely and cost-effectively. Electric bikes and scooters are an alternative mode of transportation that, if utilized properly, can serve to support the goal. Current Code Title 8 Parks and Recreation [8-1-31](#) "prohibits motor vehicle(s) and all motor driven devise(s) from being driven on public recreational areas other than a public roadway or in a parking area of a public recreation area."

PARD has received a wide variety of feedback regarding electric bikes and scooters on the trail system via survey responses, email communications, stakeholder meetings, advocacy meetings and anecdotal conversations. Both the Pedestrian Advisory Council, the Bicycle Advisory Council and the Council Mobility Committee expressed support for a pilot program at recent meetings. After careful consideration, PARD engaged PWD, ATD, and the Law Department to develop a comprehensive pilot program.

Pilot Program

Between December, 2018, and Fall, 2019, electric bikes and electric scooters will be allowed on select parkland trails that are recreational in nature but also serve as important elements in the City's transportation network.

The pilot project will:

- Gather feedback from trail users and nonprofit partners on their comfort level while using the trail through online surveys, intercept surveys and more targeted focus groups;
- Monitor speed of all users (including electric bikes and electric scooters) to understand if the current 10 mph speed limit is being followed and if it is appropriate;
- Identify pinch points or areas of limited capacity;
- Include a trail etiquette education campaign to inform users on how to safely use multi-use trails;
- Update signage to inform users which trails will be part of the project;
- Identify areas where divided use trails might be appropriate; and
- Track crash reports or injuries related to all users (electric and non-electric).

The following trails have been identified as urban parkland that serve both a recreational and a transportation function. These trails are mostly a hard surface like concrete, traverse several miles and connect to points of

interest or to other trail or road networks. For the purpose of this pilot, electric bikes and electric scooters will be allowed on the following trails that meet the urban trails designation:

- Johnson Creek
- Shoal Creek
- Northern Walnut Creek Trail
- Southern Walnut Creek Trail
- Ann and Roy Butler Trail (Electric Bikes only)

The Ann and Roy Butler Trail will be included in the pilot; however, the pilot program will be slightly modified to only allow electric bikes. The Ann and Roy Butler Trail was originally designed for recreation and nature appreciation and it serves an important recreation role. This trail also has potential to support transportation networks. PARD has specifically heard opposition to electric scooters on the Butler Trail, and the trail surface is questionable for safe operation of scooters.

PARD recognizes that some trails, including trails through neighborhood parks with limited connectivity, trails that are close to recreation amenities like playgrounds, and trails through natural areas like greenbelts and nature preserves, were designed and constructed with the recreational user only in mind, and at this time, these trails do not have the capacity, surface or width to safely accommodate motorized electric bikes or scooters.

A webpage is forthcoming that will provide program details and will also host periodic updates. Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager