

Agenda Report

DATE: March 12, 2001

TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION
SUBJECT: Review of Current City Ordinance on use of Bicycles on Park Land

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that City Council sustain Ordinance 3.24.110 (section 15) which prohibits the riding of bicycles in parks except as stipulated or posted.

BACKGROUND:

At their meeting of November 6, 2000, City Council requested that the Recreation and Parks Commission review the current ordinance pertaining to the driving of any bicycle on park land and report to Council with their findings. This request was the result of discussions by City Council Members who were reviewing the proposed City's Bicycle Master Plan, which had been presented that evening for approval. Currently City Ordinance #3.24.110 states, "No person shall do any of the acts hereinafter specified within the limits of any of the public parks to the City, the Civic Center, or the grounds of the branch libraries or other municipal buildings: (15), To drive or operate any vehicle, cycle, or automobile on any bridle path, footpath, or elsewhere than on roads, drives, or parking areas provided for such purpose." As this ordinance exists today, there is no opportunity for people to ride bicycles in parks, including trails, paths, walkways, etc.

The Commission established a Sub-committee to review the City's existing ordinance as it relates to the current and potential master plans for park development and use. The Sub-committee consisted of three Commissioners, Mark Nelson, who served as chair, Henreen Nunley and Elizabeth Pomeroy. The Sub-committee was staffed by representatives from Human Services, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department and the Transportation and Parks and Natural Resources Divisions of the Public Works and Transportation Department. The Sub-committee considered the use of bicycles only in the developed parks. The undeveloped parks, Hahamongna, Central Arroyo and Lower Arroyo are the subject of an exhaustive master plan process (with accompanying environmental impact report) which will ultimately address the use of bicycles in those parks.

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In an earlier action of January 9, 1995, the City Council did approve the Master Plan for Eaton Wash Park, which does include plans for separate jogging, cycling, and walking trails. In order to implement this element of the Master Plan, the current City Ordinance would need to be amended. The Council reconfirmed their action of January 9, 1995 at the Council meeting of June 15, 1998, pending final environmental reviews of the Plan which includes the development of an off leash area within the park.

The Sub-Committee met a total of four times between November 2000, and January 2001. Staff facilitated a park tour on Saturday, January 6, 2001 for the Sub-Committee to observe actual bicycle use on a Saturday morning at the following parks: Victory, Grant, La Pintoresca, Robinson, and Villa. The Committee noticed minimal bike usage at these parks and observed a few individuals using their bikes as transportation to the park or just to pass through the park. Of the five parks visited only one, Victory Park, has walkways wide enough to accommodate comfortably and safely both a pedestrian and a bike rider.

The Sub-committee considered three possible uses of the parks for bicycle riding:

1. The use of parks by serious bicycle riders:
2. Use of parks for family bicycle outings; and
3. Use of parks to teach young children (ages 4-7) to ride bicycles during the "training wheel" and immediate post "training wheel" stages.

We have grouped both the serious bicycle riders and the family bicyclist under one heading: "Recreational bicyclists."

The Sub-committee made the following findings:

- A. The parks are not suitable for recreational riding for the following reasons:

1. Suitability

The parks are not large enough to support bicycle riding, other than the teaching of very young children. In most cases, a bicycle can be ridden across a park in two minutes. Few recreational bicyclists would want to use our parks because of that inherent limitation.

The Sub-committee strongly supports the development of a "family" bicycle trail or path. By that we mean a bicycle path separate and apart from our street system. One example is the existing bicycle path through Southern California's beach communities. Such paths attract both serious and family riders, all of whom are attracted to such a path by the absence of competing automobiles.

The Sub-committee was unanimous, however, that our parks are not suitable for that purpose.

One exception to that finding might be Victory Park. It is possible that a path along the perimeter of Victory Park, combined with a network of quieter side streets, might provide a suitable loop (albeit at some considerable expense).

The Sub-committee would also advise the Council to consider acquiring abandoned railroad right of ways and similar areas for the establishment of a complete (and automobile free) bicycle pathway.

2. Safety

- a. The parks do not currently have designated bike pathways (separate and apart from pedestrian pathways).
 - b. Existing pedestrian pathways are not wide enough to safely support both pedestrian and bicycle use. The existing walkways are an average of nine feet wide. Safety standards dictate that shared pathways be at least 15 feet wide.
 - c. Bicycle usage in parks, particularly by children, may cause a disproportionate number of accidents. Recreation staff charged with responsibility for after-school programs confirmed that, for safety reasons, they do not want the current ordinance changed.
- B. The parks are being used to teach very young children to ride bicycles (under the supervision of adults). The Sub-committee does not believe use of the parks for this purpose is significant. While a technical breach of the ordinance, oral history indicates that the law enforcement has not enforced the ordinance in this regard. The Sub-committee does not believe any changes in the ordinance (or enforcement policy) is warranted.

The Sub-committee does urge Human Services, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department to continue their efforts to teach safe bicycle use through programs such as "Safe Moves".

In order to evaluate other city's policies on the use of bicycle riding on the parks the Committee and staff reviewed current ordinances from the following cities: Glendale, Burbank, San Diego, and Long Beach. Based upon the review of ordinances and policies from these four cities, only one city, Long Beach, has currently designated a long park

bike path, the 4-mile path within their El Dorado Regional Park.

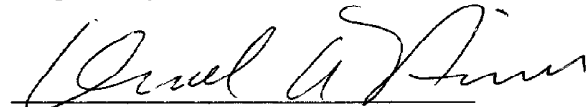
After reviewing other cities' policies on bicycle riding in parks and taking into consideration the ongoing enhancements and improvements in our parks for positive, safe recreation enjoyment, the Bicycle Ordinance Review Committee does not see any compelling reason to recommend to the Council a change in City Ordinance #3.24.110 (15) which prohibits bicycle riding in parks, except as stipulated or posted.

On February 6, 2001, the Bicycle Ordinance Review Committee presented their findings regarding the existing City Ordinance to the full Recreation and Park Commission. The Commission voted unanimously to uphold the recommendation of the Bicycle Review Committee and submit that recommendation to the City Council in February 26, 2001.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This recommendation does not require any expenditures at this time, nor is there any fiscal impact upon the General Fund of the City.

Respectfully submitted,



Omel Nieves, Chair
Recreation and Parks Commission