City of Santa Barbara

Office of the Mayor

SantaBarbaraCA.gov

RRowse@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

Randy Rowse
Mayor

City Hall
735 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA
93101-1990

Mailing Address:
PO Box 1990
Santa Barbara, CA
93102-1990

Tel: (805) 564-5322
Fax: (805) 564-5475

August 19, 2025

Presiding Judge Patricia Kelly
1100 Anacapa Street
P.O. Box 21107
Santa Barbara, California 93121-1107

Re: Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report Entitled *"E-Bikes in Santa Barbara: What Will It Take to Make Them Safe?"*

Dear Presiding Judge Kelly:

The 2024 – 2025 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report recently released its report entitled *"E-Bikes in Santa Barbara: What Will It Take to Make Them Safe?"* The Grand Jury has requested the City of Santa Barbara respond to Findings 1-4 and corresponding Recommendations within 90 days of the report issuance.

RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY

The Santa Barbara Police Department appreciates the Grand Jury's attention to the challenges and safety concerns associated with the increasing use of electric bicycles (e-bikes) in our community. We are committed to public safety and agree that education, enforcement, and community collaboration are all essential components of improving e-bike safety in Santa Barbara.

Finding 1:

Since the City of Santa Barbara's adoption of the new e-bike ordinance, Santa Barbara Police Department officers now have broad discretion in responding to unsafe behavior by e-bike riders, but, as a general principle, behavioral change requires a strategic and consistent approach.

Response: *Agree.*

The Department acknowledges that consistent enforcement and visible presence are critical to changing behaviors. Officers, including those on our Bike Patrol team, are conducting targeted patrols in areas with high e-bike usage and accident history, such as the State Street Promenade, school zones, and waterfront paths.

Recommendation 1a:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council encourage the Santa Barbara Police Department to establish a plan to strategically and consistently focus enforcement efforts in high-traffic areas so as to achieve high visibility and have the greatest impact on behavior in enforcement operations.

Please consider the environment before printing this letter.

Response: *Has been implemented (and ongoing)*

The Department has been strategically deploying officers with a plan that prioritizes high-traffic locations and peak hours for officer visibility and education since the implementation of the new ordinance. In the month of May 130 hours were dedicated specifically to enforcement of the new ordinance. This plan includes vehicle, motorcycle officers and bike officers to maximize outreach and safety.

Recommendation 1b:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council require the Santa Barbara Police Department to give the Council monthly reports on the number and severity of e-bike-involved accidents in the City of Santa Barbara, as well as the number of citations issued.

Response: *Will be partially implemented.*

The Department will begin submitting quarterly reports to the Santa Barbara Fire & Police Commission, detailing the number of e-bike-related collisions, citations issued, and notable enforcement efforts. While the recommendation requests monthly reporting to City Council, the Department believes quarterly reporting to the Santa Barbara Fire and Police Commission strikes an appropriate balance between transparency and operational sustainability. These reports will begin no later than December 1, 2025.

Recommendation 1c:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council make available to the public these monthly reports on the number and severity of e-bike-involved accidents in the City of Santa Barbara, as well as the number of citations issued.

Response: *Will be partially implemented.*

All quarterly reports submitted to the Santa Barbara Fire & Police Commission will be made publicly available through the City's website and presented in open Commission meetings to ensure accessibility and accountability to the community.

Finding 2:

The Santa Barbara City Council has tasked the Police Department and its officers with additional responsibilities related to enforcement of the new e-bike ordinance but has not provided additional funding to support those purposes.

Response: *Agree.*

Enforcement of e-bike violations is an added responsibility that has required the Police Department to reallocate existing resources and adjust operational priorities. This has affected staffing flexibility, especially during peak school commute hours and on State Street. Additional funding would support overtime deployment or dedicated positions.

Recommendation 2:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council conduct a study to determine how much new funding for this additional police work is needed.

Response: *Requires further analysis.*

The Department will work with City Administration and the Finance Department to conduct an internal resource and workload assessment to estimate funding and staffing needs for expanded e-bike enforcement. This analysis will be completed by April 1, 2026, in line with the recommendation.

Finding 3:

The City of Santa Barbara has initiated only a limited public information campaign about the new e-bike ordinance now in effect, thus limiting awareness of the ordinance.

Response: *Agree.*

Although some outreach has occurred, a broader and more sustained public education campaign is necessary to raise awareness and encourage compliance, particularly among young riders and their families.

Recommendation 3a:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council initiate an expanded and long-term public information campaign to inform and educate the public about the City's new e-bike rules.

Response: *Has been implemented (and ongoing).*

The Santa Barbara Police Department is already collaborating with the City's Communications team, other City departments, community partners and local media outlets to develop an expanded public awareness campaign. This includes digital media, public service announcements, school presentations, and printed materials available at schools, bike shops, and recreation centers.

The City's website includes a webpage dedicated to tips and resources on bicycle and e-bike safety. On the webpage, there are links to the CHP E-Bike Safety and Training as well as Places for Bikes E-Bike education. The webpage is linked often in Parent Square, CNIB, and Nextdoor announcements to reach our residents and residents with school aged children on traffic safety related messaging and when the City has new bike infrastructure in operation.

In May 2025, the Santa Barbara Police Department was awarded a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) in partnership with local nonprofit Move Santa Barbara County. This funding supports public education initiatives aimed at improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, including specialized training and outreach focused on e-bike riders. Through this grant, SBPD and Move Santa Barbara County will co-host educational workshops in schools, distribute helmets and safety gear, and develop culturally relevant messaging to raise awareness of safe e-bike operation for junior high aged students.

The Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse is providing a monthly Youth Diversion Program course on bicycle safety for youth who receive their first bicycle administrative citation. Each class is 2 hours long and a parent is required to attend the first 30 minutes of the class with the youth. Parents and youth are provided with information about why the youth was cited, reminders on traffic safety laws and the possible injuries from unsafe bicycle activity.

These partnerships directly address several of the Grand Jury's concerns and strengthens the City's capacity to promote change in behavior through education.

Recommendation 3b:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara City Council invite the cooperation and participation of secondary schools in the Santa Barbara Unified School District, private organizations that are involved in e-bike education, neighboring cities including Goleta, and local businesses for expanded public outreach on e-bike safety and laws now in effect.

Response: *Has been implemented (and ongoing).*

The City along with all the other cities in our county and SB county have a contract with MOVE Santa Barbara County to perform Safe Routes to School Education, K-12. MOVE Santa Barbara County (formerly Coalition of Sustainable Transportation and SB Bike Coalition) have been doing SRTS education since 2003. E-bike education has been integrated into their curriculum for several years now. MOVE Santa Barbara County, SBCAG, and City have also partnered on several community wide e-bike safety skills events/rides.

The Police Department has also initiated outreach partnerships with local schools, community organizations, and neighboring agencies. E-bike safety instruction is now part of school engagement efforts led by our Traffic team, in coordination with nonprofits and advocacy groups. In May 2025, the Santa Barbara Police Department was awarded a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) in partnership with local nonprofit MOVE Santa Barbara County. This funding supports public education initiatives aimed at improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, including specialized training and outreach focused on e-bike riders. Through this grant, SBPD and MOVE Santa Barbara County will co-host educational workshops in schools, distribute helmets and safety gear, and develop culturally relevant messaging to raise awareness of safe e-bike operations. This partnership directly addresses several of the Grand Jury's concerns and strengthens the City's capacity to promote change in behavior through education. We also continue to collaborate with cities like Goleta and regional partners on shared outreach events and safety messaging.

Finding 4:

The Santa Barbara Police Department has recently expanded its outreach in Santa Barbara Unified School District to instruct students in e-bike safety and laws, which is a positive development.

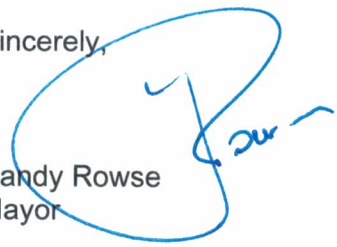
Response: *Agree.*

We are proud of our partnership with local schools and advocacy organizations. Our goal is to continue building on this momentum and to ensure that students understand both the benefits and responsibilities that come with riding e-bikes safely.

Conclusion:

The City of Santa Barbara remains committed to supporting the safe integration of e-bikes into our transportation system. We thank the Grand Jury for their detailed report and thoughtful recommendations, and we look forward to continuing our work to protect and educate all who live, work, and ride in Santa Barbara.

Sincerely,



Randy Rowse
Mayor

CC. Gwen Rigby
Foreperson Pro Tempore, Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Santa Barbara County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
emacias@sbcourts.org