



Administrative Report

N.4., File # 23-5914

Meeting Date: 4/18/2023

To: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: GREG KAPOVICH, WATERFRONT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

TITLE

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING SAFETY MEASURES FOR BIKES AND PEDESTRIANS AT THE PIER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a review of the existing safety measures in place for bikes and pedestrians at the pier and identifies possible improvements. Currently, the rules in place require cyclists to walk their bikes through the pier area at all times. Pursuant to Municipal Code 12-2.07, bicycle riding is prohibited on any portion of any pier, wharf, public area, parking structure, or City-owned property where posted. While the City can identify specific areas to post signage to prohibit bicycle riding by adopting a resolution, the process to identify and post signage is generally left to staff. There are numerous existing signs in place notifying cyclists of the rule at the pier. The City Council and Harbor Commission have requested a follow-up report, as well as a discussion to review the potential easing of the required walk-bike rule during non-busy hours.

BACKGROUND

The pier is a popular attraction for locals and tourists alike, and it attracts a large number of pedestrians as well as cyclists. Section 12-2.07 of the Redondo Beach Municipal Code (RBMC) prohibits bicycle riding where signs are posted identifying the prohibition. Placement of signs to prohibit specific areas are left to staff after considering safety issues, accident history and specific physical constraints unique to areas such as sharp turns or steep inclines, or areas where pedestrian/vehicle/bicycle conflicts exist. The current system at the Pier requires cyclists to walk their bikes through a designated area of the pier at all times.

A comprehensive report was completed in 2016, which made a number of recommendations to improve safety at the pier. The report noted that some cyclists ignore the signs and continue to ride through the pier, often endangering pedestrians or putting themselves at risk to slip and fall on any wet surfaces along the turns in the path. For these reasons, staff from the Police Department and Public Works Department concluded that the pier area remained a safety concern and general prohibition of bicycles in the area continued to date. The study also recommended changes in signage to improve the messaging of the rules. The pier area includes signs that contain flashing beacon lights. If the beacon lights are flashing, then cyclists are required to disembark and walk the bicycle. Given that the existing rules and regulations in place require cyclists to walk the bicycle at all times, the beacon lights on the sign are always flashing. The 2016 report did explore the idea of setting the flashing lights for the walk bike sign on a timer and not enforcing the rule during certain

hours when the area has limited or no pedestrian activity. However, feedback from the Police Department at that time indicated the current system requiring cyclists to walk their bikes through the pier area on a full-time basis is necessary to maximize safety and minimize accidents, so the full-time prohibition remained in effect, and is still in effect currently.

Other recommendations related to signage were made by staff in the 2016 report to help address some of the issues surrounding the signage and enforcement of this part of the pier, including additional paint modifications, bike path markings and general pedestrian warning signs. The signage recommendations were later implemented and have been in place since that time.



A section of the south pier area where pedestrian and bicycle traffic overlap

After careful consideration at the April 10, 2023 Harbor Commission meeting, the Harbor Commission recommends lifting the prohibition along the portion of the bike path within the parking structure, thus allowing bicycle riding, and instead suggests focusing on enforcing the existing advisory 5 mph speed limit throughout the area as a mechanism to control speed and improve safety. The Commission determined that the portion of the bike lane within the parking structure already adequately separates pedestrians from the bike lane with large chains, with the exception of several designated pedestrian crossing points, which are clearly marked. The Commission identified bicycle speed as the leading concern for conflict, which could lead to an increase in slippage and a decrease in reaction time to navigate the marked pedestrian crossing points. In addition to speed enforcement, they further suggested adding additional signage at various eye levels to help improve visibility and awareness of the shared space to both pedestrian and bicyclist user groups.

The Harbor Commission identified a section of the pier area south of the parking structure to contain more points of conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists and recommends shifting the bike prohibition area to this southern area of the pier on a part-time basis. They recommend the prohibition be in effect on weekends/holidays from 9am to 10pm and during approved special events. They recommend the installation of flashing lights to indicate when the bicycle prohibition is in effect, as well as placement of permanent barriers designed to induce bicyclists to dismount and walk during peak hours and also as a mechanism to provide separation between user groups.



A view of the south pier area identified by Harbor Commission

Please note that, typically, a traffic and circulation discussion is also presented to the Public Works and Sustainability (PWS) Commission for feedback and recommendations to the City Council. The next PWS Commission meeting is on Monday April 24, 2023. However, City Council directed staff to return to City Council in April and, given the timing, staff was unable to present the matter to the PWS Commission.

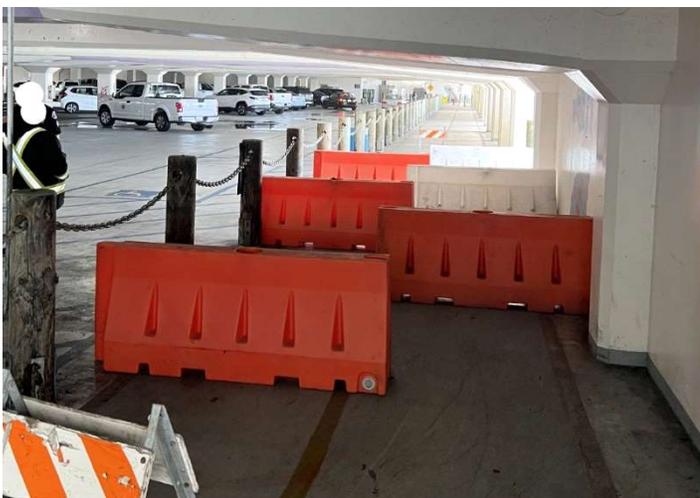
Staff does have concerns with certain aspects of the Harbor Commission's recommendation that City Council should consider. The existing posted signs indicating the 5 mph speed limit on the portion of the bike lane within the parking structure is a "recommended" speed advisory and not an official maximum limit as defined by the California Vehicle Code. The difference between a speed advisory and a speed limit is that a maximum speed limit is supported by an engineering and traffic (E&T) study that takes into consideration traffic volume (pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles) and roadway design before setting an appropriate speed limit. Speed limits supported by such a study can be enforced by the Police Department via citations with use of electronic devices, i.e. Lidar, to enforce vehicular speeds on roadways. Alternatively, an advisory speed sign is providing guidance to the bicycle rider of a safer speed and police personnel can only warn bicyclists to slow down with no ability to issue citations.

The existing prohibition of bicycle riding is codified in the RBMC making the prohibition enforceable and giving the Police Department the ability to issue citations/fines should they catch a cyclist riding in the prohibition area. Lifting the prohibition, and not having an E&T survey supported speed limit, would leave our Police Department staff with limited ability to enforce bicyclists riding in the area. While City Council can direct staff to perform such a study, the study may result in a speed limit higher than the current 5 mph advisory limit in place now. Jurisdictions wishing to enforce speed limits via citation/fine must follow the established maximum speed limit supported by the E&T study.



An example of signage along the bike path instructing cyclists to walk bikes

Additionally, the wet surfaces that often appear on the pier during inclement weather can create an additional hazard for bicycles traveling at 5 mph, with risk for slippage increasing if an E&T study concludes that a higher speed limit is supported. Enforcing the walk-bike rule consistently helps to minimize the risk of accidents and injuries at all hours of the day. For these reasons, staff recommends keeping the prohibition in place within the parking structure, and instead placing chicanes strategically at certain locations throughout the pier area. This would encourage bicyclists to follow the walk-only regulation. Please see Exhibit A which is attached for an example of how the chicanes could work. The City's pier is unique in that it attracts recreational users, retail/restaurant customers, as well as employees. As a result, people can be present at the pier from the early morning, as commercial fishing employees arrive to work to late at night when customers dine at nearby restaurants. Thus, staff concludes that the blanket prohibition is warranted at all times.



An example of physical barriers being used to calm bicycle traffic

In addition to speed enforcement, staff is concerned with the recommendation to prohibit bicycle riding in the area identified by the Harbor Commission south of the pier. This area is a very wide plaza that contains pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles. Due to the wide nature of the area, it could prove difficult to design barriers to effectively funnel the bicyclists to accomplish the very well-

intentioned Harbor Commission recommendation to separate bicyclists from other user groups and require dismount/walking.

For these reasons, staff recommends the prohibition remain in effect. A study to establish an enforceable speed limit may result in a maximum speed limit above the existing 5 mph advisory limit in effect today. In addition, enforcement of a blanket prohibition will prove easier for Police Department staff than monitoring speeds within the parking structure. Staff does agree with Harbor Commission in that the existing signage needs upgrades. This would include efforts to simplify and clarify to various user groups the appropriate rules and regulations including the placement of signs at various eye levels to fully capture the attention of both cyclists and pedestrians. Many cyclists may not realize they are required to walk their bikes through the pier area, and staff has received feedback from local cyclists that some users may not even see the signs due to their location or size. In addition, the existing signage can be construed as contradictory, making it difficult for cyclists to determine the appropriate course of action.

One area within the parking structure that can be safely reopened to bicyclists is the roughly 330 foot linear stretch between the southern parking structure restrooms and the first turn to the north (see the picture below). This area is clearly delineated for bikes, pedestrians and vehicles and can be safely traversed. It is recommended that signage be adjusted to allow for bicycle riding along this path.



An example of signage indicating a bike route within an area where bicycle riding is prohibited.



Another example of signage along the bike path indicating a 5 mph limit within an area where bicycle riding is prohibited.

In conclusion, staff supports the current system requiring cyclists to walk their bikes through the pier area as necessary (and where posted) to promote safety for all users. The current rules help protect the City from liability and consistently maintain the expectation of safety in an area where bicycle and pedestrian traffic overlap. We recommend updating the signage to ensure clear instructions, thus improving compliance with the rule, and to allow for bike riding in the area described above. Some improvements were made to the signage in 2016 after a comprehensive report, and these signage improvements should be continued. This solution will benefit all users of the pier area, including cyclists and pedestrians, and help reduce accidents, promote a safer environment at the pier and provide Police Department personnel with the enforcement tools they need to increase safety for all users of the shared pier space.

COORDINATION

Waterfront and Economic Development staff worked with the Police and Public Works Departments to prepare this report.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding is available in the Pier maintenance budget to cover the costs of the new signage and barricade systems described above. The cost of modern alert and/or flashing beacon systems have not been identified, but are also expected to be affordable within the regular annual maintenance budget.

APPROVED BY:

Mike Witzansky, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- PowerPoint Presentation - (Blue Folder)
- Exhibit A - Pier Map
- Letter - Pier Bike Path Recommendations, from Jim Light and Jim Hannon

