



FINAL

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
Meeting Minutes**

5:30 PM, Monday, October 23, 2023
Rohnert Park City Hall, City Council Chambers
130 Avram Avenue, Rohnert Park, California

Members Present: Gary Gutierrez (Chair) X Jan Ogren (Vice Chair) X Tim Hensel O
Steve Keith X Shirley Johnson X

Non-Voting Participants: Eydie Tacata (Senior Public Works Analyst, City of Rohnert Park); Jim Barrios (Parks and Recreation Commission Liaison); Eris Weaver (Executive Director, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition);

1. Call to Order

Chair Gary Gutierrez called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

2. Introductions

Chair Gutierrez commenced self-introductions.

3. Reading of the Land Acknowledgement

Chair Gutierrez read the Land Acknowledgement as shown on the BPAC Meeting Agenda.

4. Conversation with Public Safety Representative (Discussion)

Sgt. Jon Kempf and Jill Kempf, Crime Analyst, addressed the questions listed on the memorandum of agenda item topic, "Questions for Public Safety Representative."

Accidents: *How many reported accidents have involved bicyclists and or/ pedestrians within the last year?*

Ms. Kempf explained that she pulled data from the City's public safety systems for a period between October 22, 2022 – October 21, 2023. There were 18 reported accidents. Jan Ogren, BPAC Vice Chair asked what kinds of accidents, and Ms. Kempf said 10 bicycle v. vehicles (i.e. cars), 6 pedestrians v. vehicles. Steven Keith, BPAC member, asked about the remaining 2; Ms. Kempf said these were undetermined because no report was taken. Sgt. Kempf explained that when there is no report, it is because the person(s) involved do not want to cooperate, or they leave the scene before a report can be taken.

Jim Barrios, Parks and Recreation Liaison, asked whether the collisions involved e-bikes or scooters. Sgt. Kempf said the reports do not specify the types of bikes. Mr. Keith asked about recent legislation regarding electric bikes might warrant additional data collection. Ms. Kempf said that bike type information if collected would be in the reports' narrative section. Sgt. Kempf said that the vehicle collision report is not a crime report. It is possible that such information specifying bike type is included in a CHP standard report.

Complaints: How many and what type of complaints have been received within the last year? How have the complaints been received (social media, call ins, etc)?

Sgt. Kempf said that in the past year the majority of complaints have been about disturbances and destruction by packs of teenagers on e-scooters. Complaints about bicyclists are infrequent. On his evening/night patrol, regarding bicyclists, he is most concerned about their safety. He actively looks for bikes without rear tail lights or without lights at all.

There was discussion about Public Safety's community outreach on safety and enforcement of laws around motorized scooters, e-bikes, and pocket bikes. Ms. Kempf said she does not presently have a number for scooter complaints. However, the Chief of Public Safety has been hearing more citizen complaint about e-scooters and wants public education before citations are issued. Eris Weaver, Executive Director of the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition (SCBC) said she's heard from constituents who wonder why Public Safety is focused on kids on scooters instead of other priorities. Sgt. Kempf emphasized that Public Safety is responding to increasing concern about riders flying off stairs and riding across lawns; they are concerned about safety.

Bike Theft: How frequently are bike thefts reported, and of those reported, roughly what % of bikes have been returned to their owners? What is Public Safety's policy for identifying and returning bicycles? Are there databases of reported thefts, bicycles recovered, or other data about bicycle theft?

Ms. Kempf said that in the past year, there were a total of 32 bike thefts, 11 of which were Grand Theft (\$950 value and higher) and 21 were Petty Theft (less than \$950 in value). The theft locations are generally all over Rohnert Park, but mostly retail areas. Ms. Weaver asked if bikes were unlocked or locks cut off. Ms. Kempf said that it's both. Sgt. Kempf said not a lot of bikes are returned to owners, partly because the bikes aren't registered. He described the department's Automated Property System which tracks stolen property. Property can be given serial numbers and descriptions loaded into a database which is researched by Dispatch to aid in recovery. Ms. Weaver suggested the use of "Bike Index", a nationwide online bike registry that SCBC recommends to their members.

Sgt. Kempf described how stolen bikes are quickly painted and their serial numbers ground off. He said that it is still worth registering bikes. Mr. Keith asked if citizens need to go to Public Safety to register. Sgt. Kempf said that forms can be picked up at headquarters or Community Service Officers (CSO) can bring forms to residents' homes. Chair Gutierrez asked if the bike registration program is brought to schools. Sgt. Kempf said it's not been common to do this, as bikes that are registered tend to be very high-value bikes. Ms. Kempf said photos with both owner and bike or unique bike markings help document the bike and can be posted on Public Safety's social media outlets.

Ms. Weaver asked if Public Safety knew about the Facebook group "Sonoma Bike Watch" which gets the word out about stolen bikes and helps owners to find them. Sgt. Kempf answered no, but they do use social media and a "critical reach flyer" system that goes out to all law enforcement agencies. Sgt. Kempf added that over his 16 year career, he himself has only been involved in 10-15 cases of the bikes being returned to their owners. Public Safety ends up collecting a lot of bikes, and mostly they sit unclaimed. After a while, the bikes are donated: There are maybe 130 per year that are donated after not being claimed.

Citations/Incidents:

Have there been any reported incidents of cars driving on designated bike paths?

Sgt. Kempf said that there have not been reports of cars on bike paths recently, although there have been reports of pocket bikes. Shirley Johnson, BPAC Member, asked if golf carts are allowed on the bike paths. Sgt. Kempf said that golf carts are allowed to be operated on paths and streets only within a certain radius of the golf course. Chair Gutierrez said that the reason the topic is raised is because of the question of whether cars being on bike paths is a problem and the reason why bollards exist at some path entries in Sonoma County. Sgt. Kempf said he thought the bollards signaled that an intersection of a streets was coming up.

Do citizens report trash receptacles in the road blocking the bike lane and/or bike path entrances, and if so, is this a consistent issue? Are these handled as a citation or through public outreach and education?

Sgt. Kempf answered “No” to this question. Ms. Weaver said that the trash receptacles in the bike path are a hazard, citing an incident in which a student was injured hitting one. There was discussion among the group about where the trash receptacles are supposed to be on pickup days, and where bicyclists should be travelling in relation to the trash receptacles being set out, whether on bike lanes, the sidewalk or in the car lane.

Ms. Kempf mentioned as a side note, that there were 5 citations issued in the past year for motorcycles traveling in the bike lane.

Is there a general frequency for public safety officers to be out enforcing laws regarding bicycles and pedestrians?

Sgt. Kempf explained that the Rohnert Park Public Safety Department is extremely short staffed, with not enough officers to staff a regular Traffic Division. Instead, Patrol officers on their regular beats perform traffic duties when they can, when there is a slow moment or if they are in the vicinity of known hot spots. Vice Chair Ogren asked for clarification: Are there no officers dedicated to traffic enforcement? Sgt. Kempf said that there are not, although the officers try their best to address safety concerns, e.g. bikes without lights, wrong way riding. Ms. Johnson asked if there are officers on bikes. Sgt. Kempf said that he wished there was; he is the trainer who certifies bicycle officers. The department has 2 bikes, but again, not enough staff for a Traffic Division and bike cops. Ms. Johnson said that it was on the school board wish list.

How does Public Safety determine when to give a citation to a vehicle parked in a bike lane that may or may not be marked?

Sgt. Kempf said that officers are allowed discretion on how to deal with this issue. More often, they try to contact the owner to move the vehicle. The department’s CSOs also deal with vehicle abatement and parking issues. Sgt. Kempf suggested that the CSOs could speak to those issues. Chair Gutierrez said that he’d like to bring this back to the BPAC as a discussion item.

How does Public Safety handle children riding bikes without helmets? Is it citation-driven or community outreach? Does Public Safety still have a program to provide children helmets?

Sgt. Kempf said that the department prefers community outreach as opposed to scaring kids with citations. When they can, the department holds bike rodeos to teach bike riding safety and to give out helmets. This has happened at National Night Out events also. Ms. Kempf said there were 5 citations given for “no helmet/not strapped properly” in the past year. Ms. Weaver said

SCBC staff could be contacted to help with school outreach. Vice Chair Ogren mentioned that the SCBC also conducts bike rodeos; Sgt. Kempf said that the department could make it happen.

Ms. Johnson said that citations will still help. Sgt. Kempf said that the threat of getting citations acts as a warning system. He gave the example of “zero tolerance days” for drunk driving which are high-visibility enforcement events that communicate to potential offenders to not break laws. Zero tolerance days and locations are usually announced in advance and have a deterrent effect. Something like that could be done to encourage bike safety on the streets and on the bike paths.

Chair Gutierrez asked about how community outreach is done by the department. Sgt. Kempf said the department has a full-time communications specialist who handles social media. Ms. Kempf gave an example of scooter program outreach which included flyers, posts on PeachJar (online information distribution system used by the schools), Chat with the Chief, and social media message blasts on many channels.

Sgt. Kempf said that if the BPAC had anything of interest that could be posted to social media, Ms. Weaver said that the SCBC has a 30 sec. video, a public service announcement, “If you wouldn’t put it in the car lane...don’t put it in the bike lane!” that she would like posted.

Vice Chair Ogren said that she would like to get a stack of registration forms for the property database and she could give them to friends.

Potential Concerns/Hazards: *What kinds of hazards/issues to bicyclists and pedestrians is Public Safety currently aware of, and how are they addressing them? Is Public Safety aware of concerns regarding e-bikes and e-bikes and e-scooters?*

Vice Chair Ogren asked if there are bicyclist and pedestrian hazards that the BPAC should be aware of. Sgt. Kempf said that nighttime riding safety and e-scooters are the prevalent concerns recently. Bikes need white lights visible from 300’ from the front and side of the bicycle.

Ms. Weaver asked if the department engages volunteers, for example, for bike patrols. Sgt. Kempf said that volunteers wouldn’t be able to do enforcement. Ms. Weaver explained that in Sebastopol, a former mayor has been wearing a bright yellow vest with “Public Bicycle Patrol” printed on it and riding the paths. The “patrol” is not official, but people seem to act better.

Chair Gutierrez asked if there were final questions. Sgt. Kempf gave his e-mail to the committee (jkempf@rpcity.org) and his work schedule (Monday-Thursday, 4 PM-2 AM). Ms. Kempf said that she could send the statistics she collected to the BPAC.

5. Public Comments

Jim Barrios invited the BPAC to address the idea of the Parks and Paths Map. Chair Gutierrez said that he would like to have an agenda item on this topic at the next BPAC meeting.

6. Consideration of Approval of Minutes for 9/25/2023 meeting

Chair Guterrez requested two corrections on Page 3. Ms. Johnson moved to approve the meeting minutes; Mr. Keith seconded. Meeting minutes were approved with corrections: 4 ayes, 1 absence (Hensel).

7. Bike Path Audits

Eydie Tacata, staff to the BPAC, provided a background on the Bike Path Audits, which were developed by the BPAC in 2022 over several meetings and then conducted in Fall 2022. She

explained the origins of the project, that the City had a consultant develop pavement conditions ratings for the off-street bike paths so that segments could be prioritized for path rehabilitation. The BPAC at the time gave feedback on this approach, suggesting that factors such as path usage, destinations (e.g. schools, shopping) and type of users be considered when prioritizing paths to be fixed. Ms. Tacata further explained that there were 5 segments that were not audited last fall. Addressing these missing audits was a topic the BPAC wanted to have on the agenda.

Mr. Keith brought up concerns about methodology. He suggested that the audits might be more meaningful if conducted at times when path users were likely to be present, such as when school is in session, and also at consistent times for comparisons. Mr. Keith also suggested that volunteers could conduct the audits with just a minimum of incentives from the City. Vice Chair Ogren said that she also raised the issue about methodology, but she can see that that audits at this point are definitely just to get a general feel of the paths. Along with taking data and observations, she also tried to capture aspects of path usage by talking with people on the paths.

Chair Gutierrez noted that the BPAC definitely had discussions about the methodology, but we are still early in the process of its development and use. He wanted to focus at this time on completing audits of the remaining 5 path segments. Mr. Keith said that he wants to continue the development of the audits in the future. Mr. Barrios said that it is great to have an audit at all, and there will be opportunity to make it even better later.

There was discussion among the BPAC members for volunteers to audit the remaining segments. November 17 was chosen as the due date to submit completed audits to staff.

8. Project Updates

Ms. Tacata gave an update on the Hinebaugh Creek Path Rehabilitation, that it is presently in design and that the funding has been budgeted for the work.

Ms. Tacata gave an update on the Countywide Active Transportation Plan Update. Ms. Weaver asked about the consultant team lead for Rohnert Park; Ms. Tacata said that Taylor McAdam of Fehr & Peers is who she has been coordinating with. Ms. Weaver encouraged taking the consultants for a bike ride; this has been done with Cotati and Sebastopol. Vice Chair Ogren said that she could be available to take them on a bike ride.

9. New Matters for Future Consideration and Review of Future Agenda Items List

Mr. Keith asked to add an item for the continued development of the Bike Path Audits.

Chair Gutierrez said that he wanted an update and perhaps input on the Sunrise Park Improvements project.

10. Adjournment

Chair Gutierrez moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Johnson seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 PM.



Eydie Tacata, Recording Secretary
Rohnert Park Bicycle and
Pedestrian Advisory Committee



Gary Gutierrez, Chair
Rohnert Park Bicycle and
Pedestrian Advisory Committee