



Item No. 11 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

FROM: STEVE D. MCCULLEY, CHIEF OF POLICE

DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT: “BIKE SAFETY IN SAN
MATEO COUNTY: MAKING BICYCLING SAFER IN THE
COUNTY”**

RECOMMENDATION

Consider the attached response letter to the San Mateo Grand Jury on their report entitled “Bike Safety in San Mateo County: Making Bicycling Safer in the County” and, if appropriate, authorize the Mayor to sign the response letter.

BACKGROUND

On July 10, 2023, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury released a report entitled “Bike Safety in San Mateo County: Making Bicycling Safer in the County” (Attachment 1). The purpose and focus of the report are on improving bicycle safety throughout San Mateo County.

Due to differences in terrain, population density, and existing infrastructure, the 20 different municipalities and the unincorporated portions of the County have differing bicycle safety needs and requirements. Some cities are very hilly, making commuting to work, school, or transit stations nearly impossible. Others are more urban and accommodate many more commuting bicyclists. The County also has some areas that are primarily recreational biking destinations and areas that accommodate both commuting bicyclists and recreational bicyclists. As a result, each community also assigns a different level of importance to bicycle safety relative to other issues, such as crime, motor vehicle safety and public works improvement projects. And education and enforcement of bicycle laws varies from one jurisdiction to another.

Despite the differences among the jurisdictions, there are several commonalities. One is that cities and law enforcement do not consistently maintain records about bicycle near misses, accidents, or complaints; data is neither broadly available nor consistently maintained. Another commonality is that government entities focused on bicycling and/or improving bicycle safety do not communicate and collaborate with each other often enough, if at all. This makes it difficult to get accurate information on the number and severity of incidents and gauge how safe it is to bicycle in San

Mateo County. Without data, and communication among the municipalities, San Mateo County and its cities and towns lose out on available state and local funding to improve bicycle safety through physical improvement projects. The Town of Atherton is required to respond to all findings and recommendations no later than October 10, 2023.

ANALYSIS

According to the Grand Jury report, to improve bicycle safety and thereby increase ridership, San Mateo County and its Cities need to:

1. Create effective ways to educate bicycle riders and motorists about bicycle rules of the road to enhance predictability.
2. Develop consistent communications among government organizations responsible for bike safety (e.g., between law enforcement and public works).
3. Conduct enforcement details in each jurisdiction to ensure enforcement leads to education.
4. Collect accurate data about accidents and incidents that is crucial to supporting and justifying grant applications and funding from State and local agencies for physical improvements to infrastructure for bicyclists (e.g., connectivity of bicycle routes from one city to another), needed signage, and other engineering improvements.

The attached reply has been prepared for Council consideration and approval (Attachment 2). The Mayor's draft response *Agrees* with all applicable findings of the Grand Jury and for each *Recommendation* notes where the Town is in its implementation of the requirements and best practices.

FISCAL IMPACT

Currently there are no fiscal impacts in response to the Grand Jury responses.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal Area E – Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency
- Goal Area F – Be Forward-Thinking, Well-Managed, and Well-Planned

POLICY FOCUS

The Grand Jury requires that the Town indicate agreement or disagreement with specific findings in the Grand Jury Report. Further, the Grand Jury requires that the Town respond to each of the recommendations indicating whether that recommendation has been implemented, will be implemented in the future (with a specific time frame), whether further analysis is needed (with a specific time frame), or whether it will not be implemented.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders –to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item has not been before a Town Committee or Commission

ATTACHMENTS

1. Civil Grand Jury Report "Bike Safety in San Mateo County: Making Bicycling Safer in the County."
2. Grand Jury Draft Response letter from Mayor Widmer.