WHITE PAPER

BELLEMONT PROJECT SIX-POINT PLAN

PREPARED BY
Beth Black

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In recent years, communities have observed a steep rise in injuries, accidents and incidents involving e-bikes, signaling a pressing need for enhanced safety measures. While e-bikes offer an exciting and efficient mode of transportation for teens, their misuse can lead to significant risks. Often, even the most well-intentioned teens find themselves riding recklessly. It's common to see helmets dangling from handlebars, worn without clasps securely fastened, or a second rider precariously perched on a model designed for one.

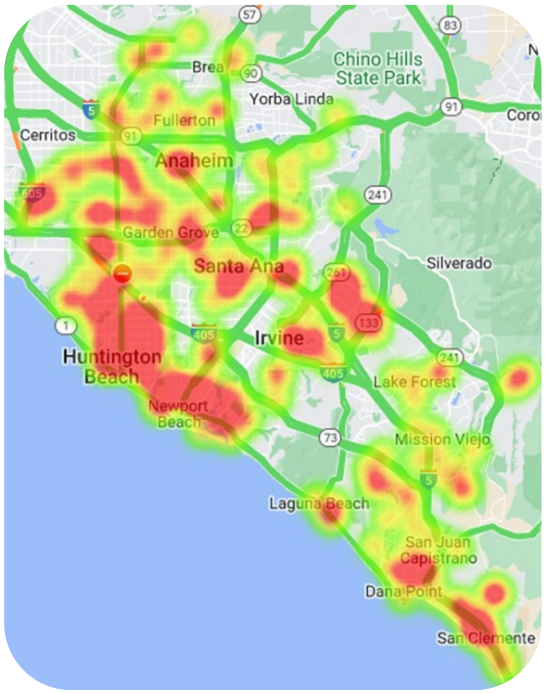
More concerning is the trend of aggressive riding behaviors, which have become increasingly prevalent. Teens boldly perform stunts in busy intersections, jeopardizing the safety of both themselves and others. They follow online instructions or tips from friends on how to tamper with their e-bike's safety features, including the brakes. On shared paths, they race at high speeds, forcing pedestrians to leap out of harm's way, or engage in dangerous games of "chicken," directly targeting pedestrians on walkways.

Alarmingly, these aggressive behaviors have escalated in some instances to outright harmful and illegal activities. Reports have surfaced of teens recklessly tossing lit fireworks into crowded areas or throwing rocks at runners. They call local authorities to report their own dangerous riding in their vicinity and then race away when officers approach. Utilizing the speed and maneuverability of e-bikes that enable them to easily evade authorities, some have turned these vehicles into tools of mischief.

Given these challenges, it is clear that a comprehensive and strategic approach is necessary to mitigate risks and promote safer e-bike practices within our communities. The Bellemont Project's Six-Point Plan aims to directly address these issues with practical, community-focused solutions. Our mission is to empower communities and their civic leaders to master e-bike safety by developing the four pillars of insightful education, effective enforcement, sophisticated use of behavioral psychology, and robust community engagement.

Electric Bicycle Injuries

CHOC has seen a rise in injuries related to electric bicycles (e-bikes). These devices bring increased risk to children, specifically adolescents. Injuries sustained while riding e-bikes are more severe compared to manual bikes due to the speed and lack of operator skill. Parents and community members should be aware of these risks as well as the laws surrounding e-bikes. Below is a summary of e-bike injuries treated by Trauma Services at CHOC Children's Hospital.



Map includes e-bike and regular bicycle collisions, created from tims.berkeley.edu

At least 45% of patients were not wearing a helmet when injured

California law requires anyone under the age 18 years to wear a helmet while riding an e-bike

Top Locations

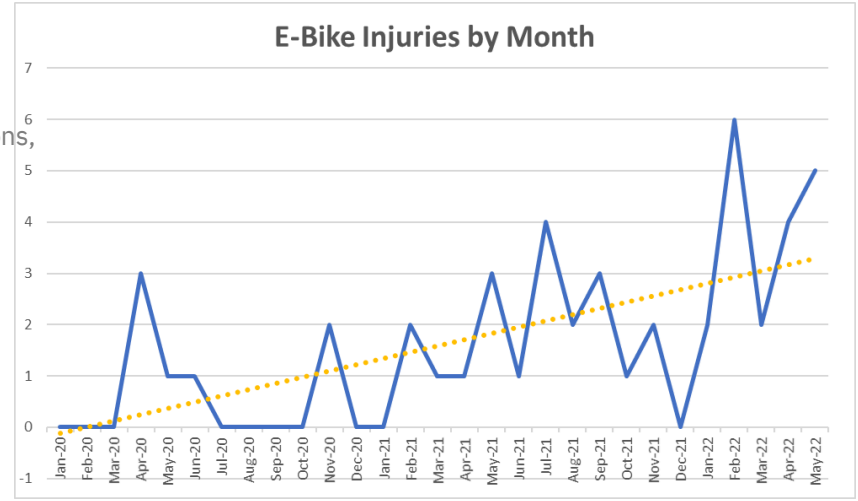
1. Huntington Beach
2. Irvine
3. Newport Beach
4. Costa Mesa
5. Anaheim

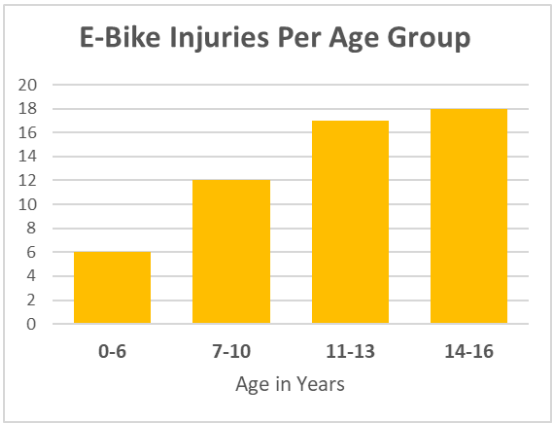
Common Injury Mechanisms

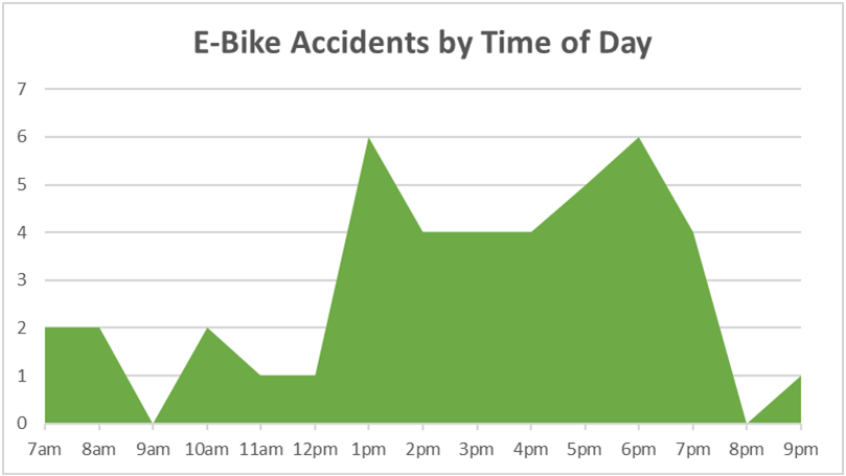
1. Falling off the e-bike
2. Collision with static object
3. Struck by automobile
4. Pedestrian hit by e-bike

Top Injuries Treated

1. Concussion
2. Extremity fracture
3. Skull Fracture
4. Facial Fracture



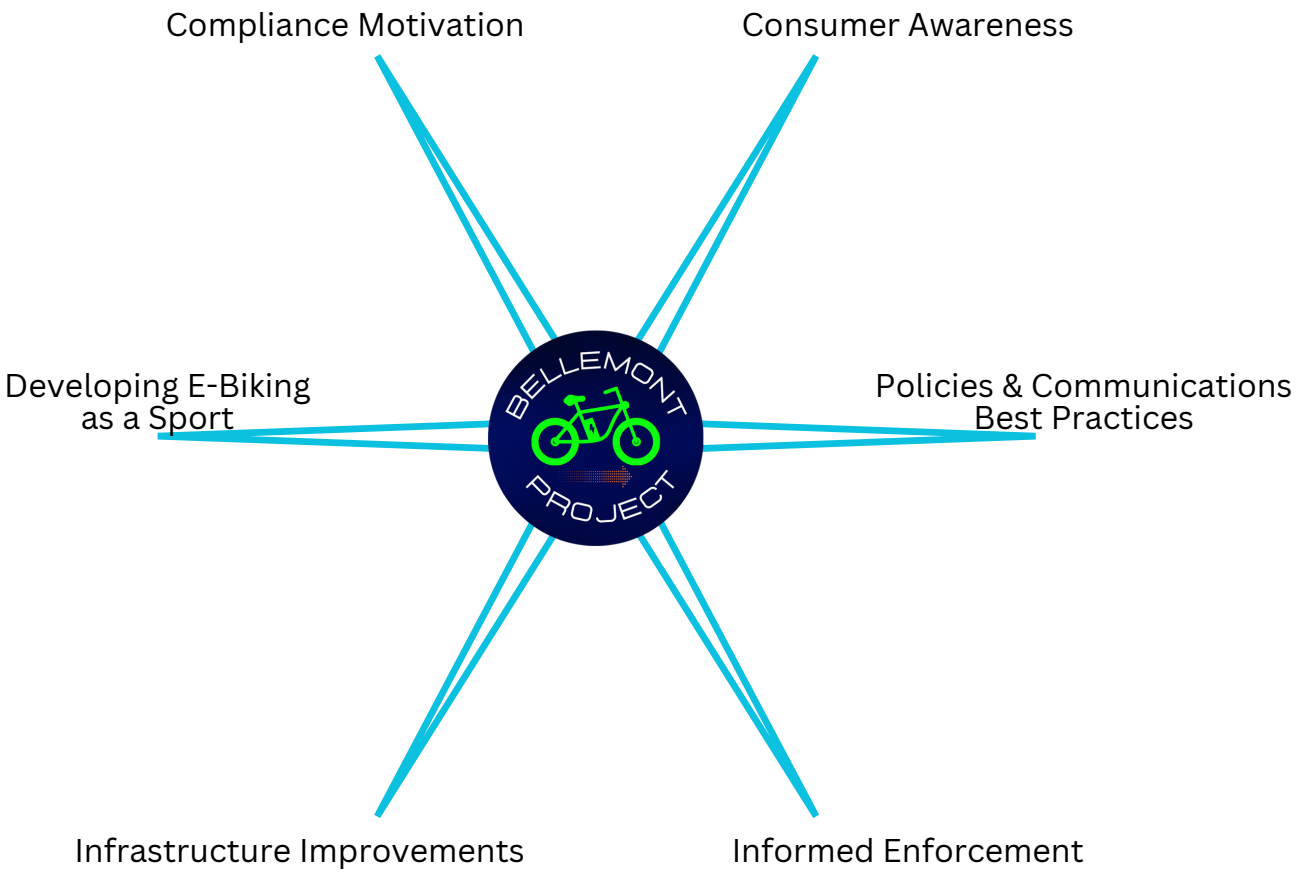




Credit: Children's Hospital Orange County (CHOC)

Prepared by CHOC, May 2022

The Six-Point Plan



Point 1
Compliance Motivation

A central element of the Bellemont Project is its innovative use of behavioral psychology to promote safe e-bike riding behaviors among teens. This is embodied in our newly renamed Incline Program™, which aims to motivate young riders to comprehend and internalize the real-life consequences of unsafe e-bike usage.

While many e-bike safety initiatives focus on education, our program goes further by emphasizing the psychological dimensions of teenage behavior. We recognize the significant influence of online trends and influencers who glorify rebellious behaviors such as street takeovers, along with the ironic peer pressure to conform to nonconformity. Of course, rules-of-the-road basic training is an essential starting point, and so our program supplements this education with compassionate, authentic discussions and assignments that encourage deeper reflection.

In groups of aggressive e-bike riders, a leader-follower dynamic frequently emerges, similar to many teen activities. The Bellemont Project seeks to disrupt this pattern by empowering teens to make safe, independent choices, rather than being swept into dangerous situations by peer influence. This approach is critical because many teens mistakenly believe that "bad things" won't happen to them — an outlook stemming from a developing brain not yet equipped with fully matured critical thinking skills.

To support this cognitive development, we provide resources like The Caring Parent's E-Bike Survival Guide, which guides parents on helping their children critically evaluate and resist negative influences. The Incline Program targets offenders prior to their behavior escalation and involvement in serious incidents, guiding both teens and their parents to thoughtfully consider the implications of risky behavior.

With broad accessibility in mind, we are adapting the Incline Program into two formats: an onsite facilitator guide and set of participant’s handbooks as well as an online version for student participants in areas without local programs. This dual approach ensures that our impact is far-reaching, adaptable, and effective in fostering lasting behavioral change by helping teens appreciate the seriousness of their riding choices.

Point 2
Consumer Awareness

As part of the Bellemont Project's commitment to enhancing e-bike safety, we place a strong emphasis on educating parents about selecting legal and appropriate e-bikes for their children. This component of our plan is crucial for preventing unintentional law-breaking and ensuring the safety of young riders.

Central to this effort is our publication, The Caring Parent's E-Bike Survival Guide, a comprehensive resource that equips parents with the knowledge they need to make informed purchasing decisions. The guide includes detailed chapters on the three legal classes of e-bikes, ensuring parents understand the distinctions and legalities associated with each type. To further support parents, we provide a thorough shopping guide, featuring sections on "What to Ask (And How They Should Respond)" and "What to Look For (And How They Should Help)." This empowers parents to confidently engage with any e-bike retailer, armed with the right questions and insights necessary to ensure a safe purchase.

Additionally, the guide offers tips on navigating online purchases of safer e-bike models, and importantly, presents a well-reasoned argument for waiting until children are at least 14 years old before providing them with an e-bike. Such guidance is invaluable in helping reduce risks and enhance safety.

Recent legal actions highlight the need for increased consumer awareness. A lawsuit filed against Irvine-Based Super73 accuses the company of deceptive sales practices by marketing high-speed bikes as safe and legal under misleading conditions. Legal experts have flagged inaccuracies in claims that speed caps can make these bikes compliant with law, spotlighting potential hazards and legal consequences for unsuspecting parents. While the lawsuit's findings remain pending, it underscores the critical need for vigilance in e-bike purchasing decisions. Parents who find themselves investing in bikes only to face school bans, police confiscations, or accidents at illegal speeds bear significant personal, financial and legal burdens.

Through initiatives like social media campaigns, news reports, books, and governmental announcements, the Bellemont Project aims to raise consumer awareness and prevent such unfavorable outcomes. In empowering parents with accurate information and strategic buying guidelines, we hope to foster a greater culture of safety and compliance within the e-bike community.

Point 3
Policies and Communications Best Practices

To effectively manage e-bike safety within communities, it is essential that civic leaders employ nuanced strategies that extend beyond simply imposing traffic ordinances. While legislation can play a role in guiding behavior, overly restrictive or poorly considered laws may inadvertently exacerbate the very issues they aim to resolve.

Consider the example of San Clemente, where a planned ordinance sought to ban teens from riding e-bikes after dark. The behavioral response to such a law could lead teens to simply turn off their lights and remove any reflective gear in an attempt to evade detection, thereby increasing their risk and undermining the ordinance's purpose.

Similarly, in New York City, a well-intended but impractical ban on e-bikes on a popular multipath has been met with widespread non-compliance. Despite clear signage, the path is predominantly used by e-bike riders, including seniors and longtime riding guides and instructors who rely on e-bikes for mobility. This example highlights a disconnect between legislative intent and user reality, particularly ignoring the fact that many adult riders operate e-bikes safely and responsibly.

Some municipalities stall in "analysis paralysis," hesitant to implement any measures out of fear that any actions may be challenged legally or reflect poorly on their civic leadership. However, this stance neglects the broader context — enhancing e-bike safety requires more than regulatory measures. It demands educational and motivational programs designed to foster community engagement and comprehensive safety planning.

The Bellemont Project advocates for viewing e-bike safety as a multifaceted issue involving a wide array of community stakeholders. By collaborating with leaders, we offer insights into the intricate dynamics of e-bike use and the diverse impacts on community safety. Through tailored educational initiatives and motivational programs, we guide civic leaders in crafting strategies that align with real-world behaviors, needs, and technological advancements.

Point 3 (Cont'd)

Civic leaders can greatly benefit from recognizing and leveraging the expertise of community stakeholders, including law enforcement, educators, traffic engineers, and the riders themselves. By adopting a holistic approach, leaders can both proactively address safety concerns and reinforce a community's commitment to safer, more informed e-bike usage.

Point 4
Informed Enforcement

Enhancing e-bike safety also requires thoroughly educating police forces about e-bike regulations to improve enforcement and ensure community safety. Our research has shown that, in many cases, only the traffic divisions of police departments receive training on e-bike laws. This gap in comprehensive knowledge often results in officers being unable to identify illegal e-bike models (or even find evidence of tampering) on the street, a fact youth have highlighted through videos posted online where they demonstrate police ignorance by flaunting the legality of their fast, illegally modified e-bikes.

These situations contribute to a pervasive belief among teens that civic leaders and first responders lack understanding of e-bike regulations, thereby undermining their authority and encouraging noncompliance. By limiting knowledge to traffic divisions, municipalities inadvertently allow retailers and manufacturers within their jurisdictions to engage in illegal activities, such as selling high-speed bikes to unsuspecting parents.

Ensuring that all divisions within local police departments are well-versed in e-bike laws allows officers to respond knowledgeably and authoritatively, supporting both legal and safe riding practices. For instance, one city in Orange County, California, demonstrated this gap in knowledge when their police department's social media shared a photo of an officer proudly returning a recovered stolen e-bike to a teen. Unfortunately, the bike was easily identifiable by those aware of e-bike laws as an illegal model, causing embarrassment among local cycling professionals.

To address these issues, the Bellemont Project recommends implementing standardized education across all police divisions. This includes training officers to conduct inspections of retailers and manufacturers using our customizable Inspection Checklist, allowing for the identification of unlawful practices specific to a community’s needs.

We also offer a pocket-sized guide for officers to easily reference e-bike laws, ensuring they can quickly identify legal violations. This kind of resource can be supplemented through our one-day regional summits dedicated to educating civic leaders and law enforcement.

Point 4 (Cont'd)

Furthermore, a more informed police force can also work with civic leaders to adopt improved enforcement practices. Currently, most local ordinances fail to allow impounding illegal e-bikes. Various states have laws defining e-bikes (like bicycles) as "property" and therefore not subject to threat of confiscation over unsafe riding as happens with, for example, drunk driving and motor vehicles.

As a result, current local practices often inadequately address procedures to follow, with riders being allowed to race away without adequate consequences.

Alas, even when officers are able to take an illegal e-moto or e-bike away, they face fire-hazard concerns regarding storage of lithium ion batteries. To mitigate storage safety concerns, we advocate for a protocol whereby seized batteries are placed in fire-safe cabinets (new individualized e-bike battery storage cabinets are in development) or perhaps working with electronic recycling centers to reduce safety risks of non-compliant batteries.

By empowering police departments with comprehensive knowledge, a working relationship with civic leaders, and strategic enforcement tools, communities can foster safer streets and support a culture of compliance and responsibility among e-bike riders.

Point 5
Infrastructure Improvements

Enhancing e-bike safety also involves significant infrastructure improvements. The Bellemont Project supports efforts such as Vision Zero, and the US Road to Safety (RTS) Coalition, which includes the Safe System Approach:

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) "Proven Safety Countermeasures initiative (PSCi) is a collection of 28 countermeasures and strategies effective in reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries on our Nation's highways. Transportation agencies are strongly encouraged to consider widespread implementation of PSCs to accelerate the achievement of local, State, and National safety goals. These strategies are designed for all road users and all kinds of roads—from rural to urban, from high-volume freeways to less traveled two-lane State and county roads, from signalized crossings to horizontal curves, and everything in between. Each countermeasure addresses at least one safety focus area – speed management, intersections, roadway departures, or pedestrians/bicyclists – while others are crosscutting strategies that address multiple safety focus areas." From **https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures.**

While cities are already implementing such measures for safer cycling generally, these efforts must account for the unique challenges posed by e-bikes — heavier, faster vehicles sometimes equipped with inadequate braking systems, especially in more affordable models.

A critical component of infrastructure improvement is addressing the hazards associated with blind curves, inclines, and corners. Teens, in particular, may disregard the dangers these present, riding recklessly or on the wrong side of paths. This behavior not only endangers themselves but also poses serious risks to other cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic engineers have a pivotal role to play in transforming paths to safeguard all users against the perils of reckless riding.

Point 5 (Cont'd)

Steep inclines may also represent a safety hazard, as e-bikes tend to be heavier than traditional bicycles, yet some bikes (lesser brands and amateur-built models) may be relying on standard braking systems that cannot adequately slow or stop a bike as needed. Signage or other methods of traffic engineering could help prevent accidents.

Introducing traffic cameras at particularly dangerous points on shared and bike paths could serve as a deterrent to reckless behavior. Although such measures might initially face opposition, strategically placed cameras can effectively help identify riders and discourage illegal activities. Accompanying these installations with clear signage indicating that footage may be shared with local schools, healthcare facilities, and community groups for identification could further reinforce compliance.

Ultimately, the methods for improving path safety should be guided by dedicated safety engineers, those who are tasked with accounting for the dynamics of faster and heavier e-bikes. By collaboratively rethinking path designs and implementing technology solutions, communities can create safer environments that reduce risks and enable all cyclists to navigate paths more securely.

Point 6
Developing E-Biking as a Sport

In the realm of e-bike safety, it is crucial to acknowledge and nurture the talent and potential that teens display in this burgeoning sport. Currently, there are limited venues for young riders to safely practice and excel. To address this gap, stakeholders across municipalities must engage in thoughtful discussions and deliberations to implement cost-effective initiatives that transform local spaces to better support and develop these emerging athletes. In step 1, we motivate better behavior, and in this step, we offer the opportunity to inspire it.

The first challenge lies with teens who excel in stunt riding. For these skilled individuals, installing temporary and customizable pump tracks in public parks can provide invaluable practice spaces and host events. By including facilities such as grandstands and organizing competitions with awards for top performers, communities can celebrate and encourage this talent. Importantly, participation in such events should be conditional on maintaining a clean street record, thereby reinforcing positive behavior and offering an incentive for safe riding practices.

The second challenge involves teens tending to race at high speeds. Currently, motocross is a popular sport nationwide, and the noise issues associated with gas-powered bikes present an opportunity for e-bike enthusiasts. Encouraging partnerships with motocross tracks to integrate e-bike racing could address noise concerns and expand the sport's appeal, making these venues welcoming to electric models. This transition aligns with community needs and revives interest in motocross by introducing an environmentally friendly, quieter alternative.

Promoting e-biking as an organized sport offers dual benefits: enhancing safety by steering potentially dangerous street activities into controlled environments, and elevating the profile of e-biking, similar to skateboarding's evolution from a sidewalk nuisance to an Olympic event. By creating designated stadium spaces for e-bike stunt riding and including e-bikes in motocross competitions, we pave the way for both local and national recognition and appreciation.

In shifting both stunt and racing activities from public roadways to appropriate sport venues, communities not only enhance safety but also foster a dynamic, engaging pastime that encourages youth to develop their skills in a safe, structured setting.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement

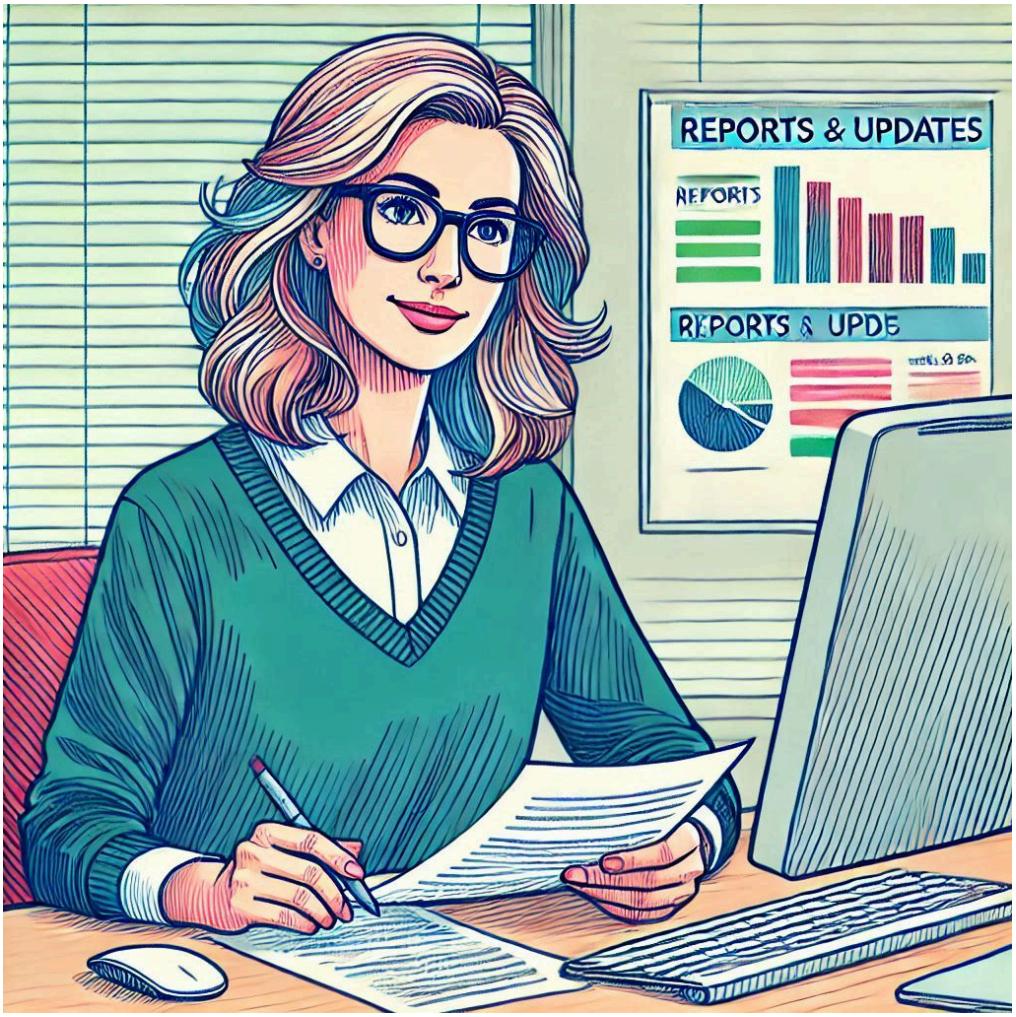
Effective e-bike safety measures require the active participation and collaboration of all community stakeholders, each of whom plays a vital role in both the challenges and solutions related to e-bike safety. The Bellemont Project has identified eight key stakeholder groups whose involvement is critical:

1. Teens - As the primary users of e-bikes, teens are directly impacted by safety initiatives and must be actively engaged in shaping safe riding practices.
2. Community Leaders - Civic leaders influence policies and programs that drive e-bike safety and community well-being.
3. Parents - Parents have a responsibility in guiding their children towards safe and legal e-bike use and making informed purchasing decisions.
4. First Responders and Enforcement - Police, emergency responders, and regulatory bodies are on the front lines, tasked with ensuring compliance, managing incidents, and providing aid after accidents.
5. Educators - Educational institutions are affected by e-bike-related incidents, and promoting safe commuting for students is a chief concern.
6. Mental and Medical Health Professionals - Professionals in these fields handle the aftermath of e-bike accidents, providing care and support for those affected.
7. Bike Industry - Manufacturers and retailers are key players in ensuring bikes meet safety standards and legally compliant specifications.
8. Community Members at Large - The broader community's safety and harmony depend on effectively managing e-bike use and ensuring public spaces are safe for all.

Each of these groups experiences the impacts of e-bike safety issues in distinct ways. Schools, for example, must prioritize the safety of their student populations, especially when it comes to commuting. The Six-Point Plan crafted by the Bellemont Project is designed to cater to the unique concerns of each stakeholder group, providing tailored resources and strategies to address current challenges and enhance e-bike safety.

The delivery of strategic solutions — whether through books, coaching materials, courses, or other means — requires comprehensive stakeholder engagement. By involving all parties in the creation and implementation of these solutions, communities can transcend the simplistic and often ineffective knee-jerk reactions, such as the mere tightening of traffic laws. Instead, they adopt a more nuanced and effective approach, ensuring that e-bike safety measures are proactive, inclusive, and adaptable to the evolving needs of the community.

Updated Guidelines



Updated Guidelines

The Bellemont Project is committed to providing current and accurate information on e-bike laws and standards as part of our ongoing efforts to enhance safety. Central to this commitment is Beth Black, founder of the Bellemont Project, who actively maintains memberships in cycling organizations both statewide and nationally. This involvement ensures she remains informed about the latest developments and can respond swiftly to changes in regulations and safety standards.

Beth's dedication to staying abreast of current laws and collaborating with industry leaders enables the Bellemont Project to deliver the most relevant updates to all stakeholders. This is particularly important during our regional one-day summits, where e-bike rules and considerations may vary significantly by region. Through these summits, Beth and the project team can provide tailored guidance that reflects specific regional needs and legal landscapes.

By staying aligned with evolving standards and proactive in disseminating this information, the Bellemont Project ensures that all stakeholders — be they civic leaders, parents, or industry professionals — are equipped with the knowledge needed to maintain compliance and enhance e-bike safety continually.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The Bellemont Project's Six-Point Plan offers a robust and multifaceted approach to tackling the pressing challenges of e-bike safety. As communities across the nation grapple with the rise of e-bike-related incidents and the complexities they introduce, it is more important than ever for civic leaders to employ comprehensive strategies that address these issues at their core.

Each element of our Six-Point Plan is designed to not only mitigate risks but also harness the potential of e-bike usage as a positive and sustainable form of mobility. By focusing on compliance motivation, consumer awareness, informed enforcement, infrastructure improvements, policy best practices, and the development of e-biking as an organized sport, we empower stakeholders at every level to play an active role in fostering safer riding environments.

Civic leaders and community members are at the forefront of implementing these transformative strategies. We urge you to actively adopt and champion the initiatives laid out by the Bellemont Project. By engaging with the Bellemont Project's founder, Beth Black, you will advance the safety of today's e-bike users and set the stage for a more informed and engaged cycling community. To deepen your involvement and enhance your initiatives, reach out to the Bellemont Project to participate in our one-day regional summits, where leaders like you can gain invaluable insights and strategies tailored to your community's unique needs.

By supporting these initiatives, community leaders can ensure their actions are not reactive, but proactive — facilitating sustainable changes that bolster safety, responsibility, and community well-being. Through Beth Black's leadership and resources, you can access tailored coaching and content that directly impact and improve your e-bike safety initiatives. We urge you to embrace this opportunity not only to secure our public spaces but also to inspire a new era of e-bike innovation and positive community engagement.

Resources

Resources

1.Learn more about the Bellemont Project at https://bellemontproject.com/

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