

2024 Year in Review: Hermosa Beach council elections portend “change in direction”

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Hermosa resident Richard Roe warns e-bikers to dismount on The Strand.
Photo by Kevin Cody

E-bikes gain acceptance

Protests against e-bikes gave way to acceptance this year as ridership skyrocketed and concerns about e-bike safety ebbed. Stepped up traffic enforcement, accompanied by stiff fines, and technology all contributed to their broader tolerance.

Hermosa Cyclery co-owner Steve Collins said e-bikes jumped from practically zero to nearly 50% of his sales following the pandemic. But he resisted renting e-bikes because his shop is half a block from The Strand, where it is illegal to ride e-bikes if pedal assist is engaged. Then, midway through the year he found a solution. He equipped his rental e-bikes with geofencing software that disengages pedal assist on The Strand.

Hermosa’s city council was so impressed with the geofencing technology that in June it passed an emergency ordinance requiring all e-bike rentals shops to have geofencing for The Strand, Pier Plaza and public parks.

The three Beach City school districts addressed complaints about students riding recklessly by requiring students who wished to park their e-bikes on campus to take an e-bike safety class.

Even Hermosa resident Richard Roe, who lives half a block from The Strand, acknowledges the e-bike problem has subsided. Last summer, Roe planted himself on The Strand wall at 14th Street, in front of his house, and yelled at speeding e-bikers to slow down. He became a local folk hero after alleging pepper spraying an e-biker who cursed and physically threatened him.

Now, the biggest problem posed by e-bikes is e-bike theft.

“We’re seeing a lot of e-bikes stolen from garages,” Hermosa police chief Paul LeBarron told the Hermosa Council. Like catalytic converters on cars, thieves are targeting e-bike batteries, which are not secure, and are easy to sell, the chief told the council. **ER**