

BEACH SCENE

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NEWS //

CLEARWATER WANTS TO BAN E-BIKES, SCOOTERS ON BEACHSIDE PROMENADE

/BY: **Carlos Moncada**

CLEARWATER BEACH — Citing growing pedestrian safety concerns, city leaders want to put the brakes on electric and motorized bicycles, scooters and similar small vehicles that zip up the popular Beach Walk promenade.

The Clearwater City Council gave initial approval March 6 to banning e-bikes, e-scooters, hoverboards, unicycles and other so-called “micromobility” modes of transportation ridden on the congested paver pathway that winds along both sides of South Gulfview Boulevard.

Council members voted 4-1 to schedule a second and final vote and public hearing on March 17. The original draft of the ordinance also would have banned the devices from Crest Lake Park and Coachman Park, but the council decided at an earlier workshop to just keep them off Beach Walk for now.

The measure comes as Clearwater Beach welcomes guests again for the first spring break since the back-to-back hurricanes of Helene and Milton last fall. Most affected restaurants, hotels and other businesses have recovered and reopened, city officials said.

“Beach Walk is part of the ambience that brings people to Clearwater Beach,” said Art Kader, Clearwater’s parks and recreation director. “But due to the number of pedestrians using Beach Walk every day, it’s important for us to make sure it is safe.”

Kader said the city has received “numerous complaints and concerns” about the eco-friendly two-wheelers, which have grown in popularity in recent years along with the number of accidents or injuries — although officials reported few such incidents locally.

Some of the devices, which have battery-powered electric motors, can weigh up to 80 pounds and can reach speeds of up to 30 mph.

Beach Walk, which opened in 2008 and underwent a renovation in 2023, draws thousands of joggers, walkers and bikers daily, especially in the late afternoons, evenings and weekends. The landscaped walkway, which runs more than a mile from South Gulfview Boulevard to Mandalay Avenue, offers stunning views of the white-sanded beach and turquoise Gulf waters.

“I feel like we need to do something on the beach,” Mayor Bruce Rector said. “I’ve seen women pushing a stroller with a child inside, and some kid on a scooter comes flying by. I’ve been almost hit a couple of times.”

Council member Lina Teixeira agreed, saying that Beach Walk is simply too crowded with pedestrians and that the potentially dangerous vehicles, operated by mostly younger riders, should be on the roads.

But council member Ryan Cotton, who cast the lone “no” vote, called the proposed ban “overreaching.”

He argued that it would unfairly apply to those beach residents who operate e-scooters or e-bikes properly, as well as people who work on the beach who ride them to get to and from the mainland.



E-bikes parked on Clearwater Beach: Photo Courtesy of Carlos Moncada

“I understand it’s a safety risk,” said Cotton, who noted his children use battery-powered scooters. “However, I just really think we’re going to be penalizing the people that utilize these the right way.”

Cotton also questioned the wisdom of banning a form of transport that could reshape urban transportation in the near future.

Council member Mike Mannino said some residents of the Skycrest neighborhood were unhappy to hear the ban would not apply to



E-biker: Photo Courtesy of Carlos Moncada

Crest Lake Park, which has a dog park. He said a Chihuahua was struck by an electric vehicle last week, but apparently was not injured.

Clearwater Police Chief Eric Gandy said enforcement of the ordinance would be “a challenge” and likely handled on a complaint basis.

“If we get calls of someone behaving inappropriately, jumping over things on their

bikes, we’ll send officers,” the chief said. “But it’s not something I’m going to be able to proactively enforce. Because they’ve proliferated to the extent that you see them all over the place.”

He said signs and other public awareness efforts might deter potential offenders, but that “it’s about personal responsibility.”



Bikes on the Road: Photo Courtesy of Carlos Moncada

Council member David Allbritton agreed, saying, “It really comes down to having regard for others.”

He noted the speed limit on South Gulfview Boulevard is 25 mph, and that riders could travel on the side of the road without feeling threatened by fast traffic.

“A lot of the people [on Beach Walk] are coming down for the first time to visit Clearwater,” Allbritton said. “I really don’t want to run them down so they don’t come back.”