

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Safety Committee of Council
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Monday, April 20, 2026, at 6:30 P.M.**

Michelle Patton, Chair of the Safety Committee, called the meeting to order.

Committee Members Present

Ward 2 Council Member – Anne Marie Etienne
Council President – Brian Fischer

Others in Attendance

Council Member At-Large Mary Berges; Ward 3 Council Member Tony Moore; Ward 4 Council Member Scott Radcliff; Mayor Bryan Jensen; Law Director John Gasior; Finance Director Steve Presley; Public Safety/Service Director Duane Streater; Police Chief Dan Fischbach; Clerk of Council Barbara Brooks

Audience Members: Bret Bartolovich, Kelly Davis, Larry Escalante, Pat Jankowski, Norma Malone, Robert Malone, and Mike McDonough

Regulations Governing E-Bikes and E-Scooters, including Helmet Requirements

Ms. Patton opened the discussion by asking the Law Director, Mr. Gasior, to begin with an overview of existing ordinances and the work already completed on the issue.

Mr. Gasior deferred to Chief Fischbach, explaining that the Chief was most familiar with current regulations and enforcement challenges. Mr. Gasior asked the Chief to discuss what was currently on the books, enforcement difficulties encountered, and indicated he would follow up after the Chief's presentation.

Chief Fischbach began by acknowledging this had been "a long time coming discussion," noting the Police Department receives complaints from citizens, primarily regarding juveniles operating scooters and e-bicycles throughout the City. He emphasized that the biggest problem was the interaction between these new devices and pedestrians, particularly when operated on sidewalks. "I think the biggest complaint we get is the pedestrians on the sidewalks feel like they're being run off the sidewalks by these kids," Chief Fischbach explained.

The Chief described these devices as "the modern day bicycle" that are becoming increasingly affordable and popular, noting they were "not going away." He stressed the need for the City to regulate these new devices while staying current with technology and maintaining realistic enforcement expectations. Chief Fischbach emphasized this was "not a policing issue" but rather "a partnership issue" requiring cooperation with parents and including an educational component.

Chief Fischbach detailed the Police Department's efforts to maintain positive community relationships, particularly with juveniles, stating they had "worked hard as an agency to develop a good partnership with our community, having a good positive interaction with juveniles." He expressed concern about making traffic stops on very young children, saying, "I don't think anyone expects Police Officers to be making traffic stops on 10 year-olds on their scooters and then citing them and impounding vehicles, even though I think some think that would be appropriate."

The Chief outlined current educational efforts, including a two-year initiative with bicycle unit officers conducting a "smart helmet campaign" during summer months, where they hand out awards and

certificates to children operating devices safely while wearing helmets. They also made it a point to stop and talk to children who weren't riding appropriately or wearing safety devices.

Chief Fischbach cautioned against expecting additional legislation enforced solely by police to solve the problem, stating it was "not a realistic expectation" and describing it as "a bigger problem than that." He advocated for legislation that could be "practical and useful," serving first as an educational component involving City Government, City Council, the Police Department, Schools, and School Resource Officers, with regulations serving as "a fallback for maybe repeat offenders or egregious offenders that aren't getting the picture."

Current Ordinance Issues and Enforcement Difficulties

Chief Fischbach explained that current Ordinances "pretty much mirror Ohio Revised Code" but acknowledged it was "not great legislation, but it's better than nothing." He noted that legislation typically lagged behind technology, particularly with the rapid development of e-scooters and e-bikes and their increasing affordability.

The Chief identified a fundamental safety question: "Where do we want them riding? Do we want them riding in the street, or do we want them riding on the sidewalks?" He expressed personal preference against children riding in streets, stating, "I'm not a big fan of kids riding anything in the street. I think anytime you have devices interacting with vehicles, that's just not a great solution in my opinion."

Under current Ordinances, bicycles and scooters were permitted in both roadways and on sidewalks, with the choice left to the rider. However, Chief Fischbach identified conflicting language in the Ordinances regarding micromobility devices on sidewalks. While one section allowed them on sidewalks without mentioning motor engagement, another section specifically prohibited having motors engaged on sidewalks.

The Chief advocated for clearer language, suggesting the use of plain terms like "electric scooter" instead of "low speed micro mobility device," which he noted was "good lawyer language" but unclear to the general public.

Target Demographics and Enforcement Reality

Chief Fischbach identified the primary demographic as children aged 8 to 14, particularly "Heritage Middle School type kids," with fewer High School students as they approached driving age. He reiterated concerns about traffic stopping and citing young children, emphasizing that most were "kids that need to be educated on how to properly interact with other people."

The Chief drew parallels to seat belt enforcement, noting it wasn't a primary offense in Ohio and that "some of that has to be put back on the end user" and parents who were "setting their kids out without helmets."

Educational Efforts and School Partnerships

When asked about School Resource Officer education efforts, Chief Fischbach confirmed they were actively educating children in schools through classroom time and Safety Town programs. He noted they were incorporating electronic device safety into younger age groups as the trend was appearing earlier. The bicycle unit officers had been proactive in neighborhoods, "riding the bikes with the kids" for educational purposes.

Chief Fischbach mentioned that their Middle School Resource Officer had created an educational flyer outlining e-bikes, scooters, and current regulations, though he noted this might need updating based on potential legislative changes from the Committee meeting.

When Mr. Fischer asked about reaching the target age group through programs, the Chief explained they had attempted bike rodeos for that demographic two years prior with poor attendance, eventually canceling the following year due to lack of interest. "This age group of kids, they're not interested in coming to listen to police talk about bike safety," Chief Fischbach observed, suggesting parents were the key audience needing education.

Classification and Identification Challenges

Ms. Etienne questioned Ohio Revised Code requirements for helmet use under 18 for devices over 50cc. Chief Fischbach clarified the confusion between gas combustion engines (50cc) and electric wattage (750 watts for class 3 e-bikes), illustrating the complexity officers faced in determining device classifications during stops.

The Chief explained that manufacturers were supposed to label e-bikes clearly indicating their class, but noted many came from overseas manufacturers with varying compliance. He emphasized that officers "can't identify the class of the bike simply by looking at it" without physically examining labeling, and that devices often exceeded posted speed limits regardless of their supposed classifications.

Helmet Usage and Safety Observations

Despite enforcement challenges, Chief Fischbach noted positive trends in his observations: "Most of the kids on the e-bikes are helmeted, and they're wearing off road dirt bike helmets, which they should be full face protection, which is good to see." He credited parents for generally equipping children with proper safety gear, though acknowledged there were still children without helmets engaging in unsafe practices like doubling up on devices.

Multi-Use Trails and Location Restrictions

Ms. Patton inquired about e-scooters and e-bikes on multi-purpose trails, noting some cities prohibited such use. Chief Fischbach supported excluding these devices from wooded park trails like Miller Nature Preserve, but acknowledged the complexity of determining appropriate locations. He noted these devices provided mobility and transportation to school for some children, making complete restriction problematic.

The Chief identified the fundamental challenge: "At the end of the day, there's not one great place for them." He ranked sidewalks as the preferred location over roads, despite acknowledging safety concerns with cars entering and exiting driveways not looking for fast-moving children on sidewalks.

Accident and Incident History

Mr. Gasior inquired about collision history between e-scooters/e-bikes and automobiles. Chief Fischbach reported "fortunately, no significant incidents, with most being very minor" with no injury and minimal damage, typically not requiring crash reports. The Police Department maintained log entries for all calls but hadn't experienced regular injuries or serious accidents.

Regarding pedestrian injuries from e-scooters, the Chief confirmed no known incidents, though he acknowledged the potential and emphasized the importance of proactive regulation. He noted recent incidents in neighboring cities involving e-bike collisions with motor vehicles, reinforcing the timeliness of updating legislation.

Ordinance Content and Communication Gaps

Ms. Berges expressed surprise at the comprehensiveness of existing Ordinances, noting they covered multiple riders per bicycle, nighttime lighting requirements, and motor disengagement on sidewalks. She emphasized the primary issue was "an education/communication component" rather than lack of regulation, as many children and parents were unaware of existing rules.

Ms. Berges advocated for requiring helmets across all three classes of devices for both safety and enforcement simplicity, noting this would enable officers to address helmet violations as educational opportunities rather than citing violations.

Multi-Use Path Considerations

The discussion expanded to include the French Greenway multi-use path, with residents expressing concerns about e-scooter and e-bike usage. Ms. Berges noted this required a Committee decision regarding restrictions on that specific path and other areas like the Traxler property.

She suggested distributing educational materials through City newsletters, social media, and both public and parochial schools. Chief Fischbach confirmed positive relationships with parochial schools and regular communication with their administrations, facilitating information distribution.

Helmet Standards and Safety Equipment

When asked about appropriate helmet standards, Chief Fischbach acknowledged needing research into proper specifications. He mentioned the Department of Transportation standards for motorcycle helmets at higher speeds and suggested DOT regulated helmets might be appropriate for class 3 devices capable of 28 mph. However, he noted practical enforcement limitations, as officers couldn't readily identify proper helmet compliance, and fake DOT stickers were available.

The Chief concluded pragmatically: "If they got a helmet on, I think that's a great start. If it's the right helmet, I think that's a conversation for another day."

Legal Classification Clarification

Ms. Etienne sought clarification on ORC requirements for 16-year-old operation of e-scooters. Chief Fischbach explained the confusion stemmed from different device definitions, with the referenced law applying to "electric personal assistive mobility devices" (Segway-type devices) rather than scooters. This illustrated the ongoing terminology confusion between segways, electric wheelchairs, and scooters in existing legislation.

The Chief reiterated his preference for plain language like "electric scooter" in Ordinances rather than complex legal terminology that created confusion for both officers and the public.

Speed and Enforcement Limitations

Mayor Jensen noted that devices often exceeded their supposed 20 mph speed limits. Chief Fischbach confirmed this observation but explained the Police Department's limited capacity for speed enforcement on these devices, as radar systems were designed for larger vehicles. Officers relied on visual estimation and experience to assess speeds.

Registration and Alternative Enforcement Ideas

Mr. Gasior proposed vehicle registration as a potential solution, similar to animal licensing. This would involve initial Police Station registration providing educational opportunities and establishing responsibility for proper operation.

Chief Fischbach noted Avon Lake had implemented registration but found it "very difficult to track, manage, and enforce" with no practical way for officers to identify registered devices without stops. He expressed openness to exploring solutions while cautioning against impractical legislation creating unrealistic enforcement expectations.

Regarding theft concerns, the Chief reported surprisingly few issues despite device values, attributing this to parental oversight and the general disposability of bicycles in their experience.

Unified Classification Approach

Mr. Radcliffe suggested Ohio's 16-year-old helmet requirement for bicycles was appropriate and supported school-based educational efforts through registration forms requiring parental signatures acknowledging rules and responsibilities. He also proposed posting speed limits and "share the pathway" signs as visual reminders, comparing this to automotive speed limit signs.

Mr. Radcliffe expressed skepticism about officers distinguishing between device classes and determining specific speeds, advocating for practical approaches focusing on parental accountability and educational initiatives.

Ward 1 Council Member Jennifer Demaline arrives at 7:06 pm

Age Demographics and Device Classifications

Ms. Patton inquired whether children in the 11-14 age range typically used class 3 vehicles. Chief Fischbach explained the impossibility of visual classification without physical inspection of device labeling, noting that enforcement decisions required contextual judgment about speed and motor usage.

He observed that children on e-bikes generally wore proper protective gear, including full-face dirt bike helmets, crediting parents for safety equipment provision while acknowledging ongoing issues with unprotected children engaging in unsafe practices.

Audience Comments

Mike McDonough, 3040 Center Road, identified himself as a "bike-aholic" and strongly supported the Chief's school-based educational approach targeting the critical middle age group between Safety Town participants and driving-age students. Mr. McDonough advocated for unified rules across all device classes, questioning why different classifications required different regulations when safety principles remained constant.

He observed children using devices on State Route 83 at 45 mph speed limits regardless of device class and suggested simplifying regulations with universal helmet requirements and age restrictions. Mr. McDonough referenced increased head injury statistics of 1800% and emphasized vulnerability of children due to body size proportions. He volunteered to assist with educational programs and supported registration requirements for responsibility establishment.

Bret Bartolovich, 36755 Lakeland Drive, agreed with enforcement priorities while emphasizing the need for action. He contrasted natural pedaling speeds of 12 mph with observed electric speeds of 25 mph on 25 mph residential streets. Mr. Bartolovich advocated for parental responsibility enforcement through Common Pleas Court when necessary.

He reported specific property damage from children using drainage ditches and culvert embankments as jumps, resulting in cracked drain tiles under driveways and City storm infrastructure. Mr. Bartolovich

described encountering groups of 7-8 children without helmets, riding double, and exhibiting challenging behavior when confronted, attributing this to parental influence.

Larry Escalante, 2122 Southhampton Drive, represented Avenbury Lakes residents, highlighting unique challenges with private streets south of Middleton Road creating enforcement complications on non-gated private property. He supported helmet requirements, device registration, and parental responsibility for property damage and injuries.

Mr. Escalante emphasized safety concerns for less mobile residents and anticipated hit-and-run scenarios where children would flee accident scenes. He requested updated educational materials for community distribution and stressed the need for parental accountability given children's limited concern for consequences.

Committee Conclusions and Next Steps

Mrs. Demaline expressed support for helmet requirements on e-scooters for those under 18, referencing Bay Village regulations, and endorsed parental responsibility measures.

Ms. Patton concluded the meeting by thanking all participants for their contributions to the comprehensive discussion on e-bike and e-scooter regulation challenges and potential solutions. The Committee had thoroughly explored current enforcement difficulties, educational opportunities, legal clarifications needed, and community concerns while establishing foundation for future legislative updates addressing safety, accountability, and practical implementation considerations.

The meeting demonstrated broad consensus on the need for enhanced educational efforts, simplified and clarified regulations, universal helmet requirements for minors, and balanced enforcement approaches prioritizing safety education over punitive measures while maintaining accountability mechanisms for egregious violations.

Adjourn: 7:26 P.M.

Ms. Patton adjourned the Meeting of the Safety Committee of Council

Respectfully submitted by Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Michelle Patton, Chair of the Safety Committee

ATTEST: _____
Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council