

News

Park It: Electric bikes allowed on three East Bay trails



Jim Stevens/staff archives

The Iron Horse Regional Trail, above, which runs between Concord and Pleasanton, is one of three regional trails for which the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors has for the first time approved a one-year pilot program allowing electric-powered bicycles.

By **NED MACKAY** |
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Electric powered modes of transportation have been much in the news lately. In keeping with the trend, the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors has approved a one-year pilot program allowing electric-powered bicycles for the first time on three regional trails.

The three are the Iron Horse Regional Trail, which runs between Concord and Pleasanton; the Contra Costa Canal Trail through Concord, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill and Martinez; and the Alameda Creek Regional Trail, which follows the creek from Niles Canyon through Fremont to San Francisco Bay. The pilot program will begin Aug. 1 and last through August of 2018. Some caveats are:

- Only Class 1 and 2 e-bikes will be allowed. These are bicycles with fully operational pedals and electric motors of less than 750 watts.
- There's still a 15-mph speed limit for all bicycles, whether electric- or muscle-powered. And bicycle riders are supposed to call out or use a bicycle bell as a warning when passing other trail users. All other bicycle safety rules are still in effect.
- The pilot program is only on the three trails mentioned. Electric bicycles are not allowed on other regional interpark trails or on hiking and bicycling trails within the regional parks. In general, motorized vehicles aren't allowed on regional park trails, except of course for police, fire and ranger vehicles. The only exceptions are powered vehicles used by people with physical disabilities.

The pilot program is in response to increased bike commuting in the state, including on the three trails that are in the pilot program. It's also an effort to provide more access to paved regional trails for people who have physical limitations. And bike transit may help decrease congestion on local highways.

"We are interested in seeing how this pilot program works out," said Beverly Lane, president of the Park District board. "These trails are already well-used, so users need to remember to share the space, as always."

In 2015, Gov. Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 1096, which modernized electric bike regulations for trails in state parks and authorized local agencies to do the same for their trails. During the pilot program, park district staff, interns and volunteers will be out on the three trails to inform the public and assess the impacts.

ALAMEDA: So what else is going on in the parks? Quite a bit, actually. For example, you can practice morning yoga by the bay from 8 to 9:30 a.m. July 23 and again on Aug. 27 at Crab Cove Visitor Center in Alameda.

Under the guidance of Stacy Dulan and the Crab Cove interpretive staff, learn Vinyasa flow yoga, then enjoy some nature exploration. All experience levels are welcome; bring a yoga mat. The class may be indoors or outside, depending on the weather.

If you're a later riser, drop by Crab Cove from 12:30 to 2 p.m. July 23, visit the small nectar garden, watch the honeybees, eat a sweet snack and roll a beeswax candle. Naturalist Susan Ramos will preside. Crab Cove is at the end of McKay Avenue off Alameda's Central Avenue. For information, call 510-544-3187.

BERKELEY: Tilden Nature Area near Berkeley has a Talk With the Animals program from 11 to 11:30 a.m. every Sunday in July and August. The idea is to learn how the animals move, find their food and keep safe from predators. Rabbits will be the stars of the show on July 23. The program is at the Little Farm, which is at the north end of Tilden's Central Park Drive. Call 510-544-2233.

OAKLEY: Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley will host All Abilities Day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. July 25. Visitors can travel along paved trails to visit stations to touch fur, listen to birds, draw wildlife, scan the Delta waters and paint the view. There will be indoor and outdoor options and wheelchair accessibility. Big Break is at 69 Big Break Road off Oakley's Main Street. For information, call 888-327-2757, ext. 3050.

Ned MacKay writes a regular column about East Bay Regional Park District sites and activities. Email him at nedmackay@comcast.net.

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