

# Kids who take over streets will have bikes impounded

- Police agencies often asked to respond to larger gatherings



Street takeovers performed by juveniles on bicycles has become such a dangerous practice that the city of Ceres is putting teeth in the local law to help end the practice. - photo by Contributed

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Councilwoman Rosalinda Vierra expressed concerns last week about the addition of two sections to bicycle operation regulations to the Ceres Municipal Code, titled, "Section 10.05.120 – "Organized, Planned or Street Take Over," and adding penalties.

The council voted unanimously to formally adopt the new ordinance.

Past problems with large gatherings of youth on bicycles and taking over the streets in Ceres led Ceres Police Chief Trenton Johnson last month to ask the council to strengthen local laws intended to strengthen enforcement. Ceres is not alone in experiencing large crowds of mostly juvenile makes ignoring traffic safety laws, blocking vehicles and committing unsafe maneuvers. The annoying fad has raised the ire of the motoring public. Vierra voice her specific concern about giving the public the impression that every time they call in about kids on bikes that an officer will respond. "Just last week I called in because I had two kids play chicken with me coming on oncoming traffic," said Vierra. "They came into my lane and popped their wheelies trying to come directly to me. One of them I was positive was going to hit my car. These calls continued on for several hours and no one even seemed to respond ... to let me know something was going to be done." Vierra reported seeing the same individuals block her path into McDonald's on Service Road and on Pine Street.

Johnson said his department works with other law enforcement agencies, including air support, whenever dealing with large clusters of bicyclists gather.

"We will target the main instigators that are committing these violations and we'll go after them first," the chief explained. "It's not practical for any jurisdiction to target a group of 70 or 100 and to enforce every law and every rider."

Johnson also explained that juveniles who are apprehended are issued a citation and their parents notified. The new ordinance allows the officer to seize the bike for 30 days "so they don't have the ability to just ride off and reoffend eight then."

Vierra said instances of juveniles on bicycles riding disrespectfully and causing problems "seems like a weekly thing" and that she would like Ceres Police to be consistent in enforcement "if we have the resources and the officers available."

Councilwoman Cerina Otero thanked Johnson and the department for being proactive and believes the ordinance change will be good for the community's safety.

Impounding bicycles for 30 days is part of the new enforcement effort along with impound fees of \$250 for the first impound, \$500 for the second, \$750 for the third and \$1,000 for the fourth or subsequent impounds.

The new law will also apply to electric bikes provided they don't exceed 20 mph or 750 watts of power.

Since January 2024, Ceres Police has recorded 19 injury collisions involving bicyclists, two of which were fatal. In the same time, Ceres Police received 85 calls for service related to "bicyclists riding without due regard for the safety of people and property ... riding recklessly, blocking traffic lanes, and failing to obey traffic laws."

The police chief said bicyclists must follow the same California Vehicle Code as do those who drive vehicles. One common bike offense is blowing through stop signs and red lights and improper lane usage.

The new section will outlaw bike riding at any sponsored event where the street has been closed to vehicle traffic, such as the Ceres Street Faire or opening night of Christmas Tree Lane.

One provision will allow the Police Department to refer minors 16 years of age or younger, who violate any part of this ordinance or a related Vehicle Code section, to a bicycle safety course.