Parks and Recreation Board

City of San Diego

July 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Board Letter of Support for a Regional Docked E-Bike Share System

Dear Mayor Gloria, Council President LaCava, Community and Neighborhood Services Committee Chair Campbell, Director Field, and Director Vonblum:

On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Board, we write in strong support of the development of a regional docked e-bike share system and affirm our endorsement of the Mobility Board's April 9, 2026, letter.

The City's Parks Master Plan guides our vision of a thriving parks and recreation system that delivers accessible, safe, convenient, and equitable opportunities for all San Diegans. A regional docked e-bike share network would substantially advance this vision by expanding residents' practical access to City parks. Ninety-two percent of San Diego residents already live within a 20-minute bike ride of a city park, a testament to the strength of our park and bike networks. Yet for the many households without a personal bicycle, that proximity remains unrealized. A docked e-bike system would give most residents an affordable, convenient means of reaching parks and would offer visitors a vehicle-free option for traveling to destinations such as Balboa Park and the beach.

The docked design is essential for parks. It keeps facilities clean and orderly by eliminating the clutter and management challenges associated with dockless micromobility. We further note that the proposed system would consist strictly of Class I pedal-assist e-bikes limited to a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph. These bikes are, by and large, already allowable wherever conventional bicycles are permitted across the parks system, while offering meaningful assistance to residents who face topographical or mobility barriers.

Bikeshare should remain broadly accessible across the park system. However, in a small number of high-activity areas, such as boardwalks, multi-use park paths, beachfront promenades, targeted geofencing can help manage conflicts with pedestrians. Some of these areas already have limitations on bike access; geofencing offers a way to support and reinforce those existing rules. This might mean reduced speed zones or no-ride restrictions applied to those specific corridors. This focused approach protects visitor safety without limiting bike access anywhere else in the network.

Beyond parks access, a regional docked e-bike share system is an affordable, economically beneficial investment in mobility, workforce access, and regional competitiveness. San Diego is one of the largest metropolitan regions in the United States still without a modern, integrated bike share system. Such a network would directly advance the City's Vision Zero goals, Climate Action Plan, mode-shift targets, and first-mile/last-mile connectivity objectives, while particularly benefiting Communities of Concern where car-ownership rates are lower.

We recognize the City's structural budgetary constraints. Successful systems require public investment, yet that investment need not fall solely, or even primarily, on the City's general fund. Proven diversified models include corporate title sponsorship, station advertising (subject to local regulations), public-private partnerships, state and federal grants (Active Transportation Program, Clean Mobility Options, CMAQ, and others), operator capital participation, employer and university bulk-membership subsidies, and targeted local funding aligned with mobility and equity goals.

A fragmented, city-by-city approach would raise costs and reduce usability. The City of San Diego's early leadership would anchor a regional coalition, enable a single coordinated procurement, create one interoperable system, and strengthen the region's competitive position for grant funding.

To maximize equity, safety, and climate benefits and to better serve both residents and the many visitors who arrive without personal equipment, we recommend the program incorporate:

- Equitable station siting prioritized in Communities of Concern;
- Affordable pricing with additional subsidies for CalFresh recipients and other qualifying individuals;
- Clear age restrictions with parental or guardian authorization controls limiting independent use by riders under 16 (and requiring parental involvement for eligible younger teens), consistent with proven practices in other docked systems;
- An upgraded helmet solution integrated into the system—such as bike-attached helmets with sanitary liners or convenient station-based dispensers available at low or no cost, with value for visitors and tourists who may not bring their own;
- Safety education delivered through League Certified Instructors and trusted community partners.

We therefore urge the Mayor and City Council to:

- Pursue ATP Cycle 8 and other available grant funding;
- Reform San Diego Municipal Code section 83.0308 by:
- Waiving operator permit and related fees;
- Removing overly restrictive general geofencing requirements that hinder system usability but enabling and prioritizing targeted geofencing, speed limits, and access controls on boardwalks, park multi-use paths, beaches, and other high-pedestrian recreational areas;
- Take the steps necessary to ensure San Diego leads this regional effort.

A regional docked e-bike share network represents a practical, high-impact investment in park access, public safety, climate goals, and regional competitiveness. We stand ready to support its advancement.

Sincerely,

Marcella Bothwell, MD, MBA

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Chair, City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Board

Cc: Chida Warren, Director, Office of Boards and Commissions

Heidi Vonblum, Director, Planning Department