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VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY



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July 27, 2015

The Honorable Donald D. Coleman  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Ventura  
800 S. Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Countywide Bicycle Safety

Dear Judge Coleman:

The City of Ventura received the 2014-2015 Grand Jury report, "Countywide Bicycle Safety". In accordance with Penal Code section 933.05, we submit this response to the Grand Jury findings and recommendations.

The City Council appreciates and welcomes the efforts of the Grand Jury's review of countywide bicycle safety.

The Grand Jury requires a response to findings FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-05, FI-08, FI-10 and FI-11 and recommendations R-01, R-02, R-03 and R-04.

**Findings**

**FI-01:** *Throughout the County, law enforcement personnel rarely enforce helmet laws. They do not enforce bicycle licensing ordinances.*

Response to FI-01: Neither Agree nor Disagree. While it is accurate few citations are issued for helmet and licensing violations, the exact number of enforcement stops for helmet violations is not calculable. It is a common practice for officers to talk to children who are in violation of helmet laws, counsel them and release them without issuing a citation. Such encounters are not documented and thus cannot be quantified. In regards to the second finding contained within FI-01, it is correct there is no enforcement of bicycle licensing ordinances; however the Ventura Police Department does conduct public education efforts regarding the benefits of bicycle licensing and registration.

**FI-02:** *Licensing or registering bicycles with the Police Department assists in the return of lost or stolen bicycles to owners, thereby reducing the number of unclaimed bicycles.*

Response to FI-02: Agreed. Licensing or registering bicycles with police departments does assist in the return of lost or stolen bicycles to owners.

**FI-03:** *Bicycle helmet laws for children are not routinely complied with nor enforced.*

Response to FI-03: Neither Agree nor Disagree. The Ventura Police Department has no data to confirm the finding that children do not routinely comply with helmet laws. From an anecdotal standpoint, children are regularly found in compliance with helmet requirement laws. It is accurate few citations are issued for helmet violations; however enforcement efforts through counseling are common.

**FI-05:** *Of all the factors contributing to bicyclists' deaths and injuries, motor vehicle driver error is the most prevalent. Rear-ending of cyclists is the most common error.*

Response to FI-05: Neither Agree nor Disagree. The City has not recently conducted a comprehensive evaluation of injury bicycle collisions in the City. In previous evaluations wrong-way bike riding was the most prevalent cause of bicycle-vehicle traffic collisions.

**FI-08:** *Salmoning places cyclists at greater risk as motor vehicle drivers are not expecting riders to be coming directly toward them. Many people are unaware that salmoning is illegal in the State.*

Response to FI-08: Agree. Riding a bike in the street against the flow of traffic is illegal and previous evaluations have shown that all forms of riding a bike against the flow of traffic (even on sidewalks) is the most common cause of bicycle-vehicle traffic collisions in the City.

**FI-10:** *City and county bicycle advisory commissions/committees have been able to better educate people to be aware of bicyclists. They help bicyclists become more knowledgeable of the rules of the road and thus become safer cyclists.*

Response to FI-10: Agree. Bicycle advisory commissions/ committees do help educate bicyclists on best safety practices and increase bicyclists' knowledge of rules of the road.

**FI-11:** *Bicycle advisory commissions/committees, working in conjunction with city councils and/or transportation agencies, have been able to assist local governments in obtaining State, federal and other grant monies to be used to build bicycling infrastructure and educate the public about pertinent laws and safe riding practices.*

Response to FI-11: Agree. Bicycle advisory commissions/ committees working in conjunction with city councils, transportation agencies and police departments have helped obtain grant monies, which are in turn used to increase bicycle safety. The City currently uses an ad-hoc bicycle focus group, which was instrumental in the preparation of the City's 2011 Bicycle Master Plan. Staff continues to meet with the group when necessary and will be meeting with them regularly to update the Bicycle Master Plan in 2015-16.

### **Recommendations**

**R-01:** *The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of all cities within the County encourage their respective law enforcement personnel to increase enforcement of bicycle and related motor vehicle laws.*

Response to R-01: The Ventura Police Department does encourage our law enforcement personnel to not only conduct enforcement of bicycle and related motor vehicle laws, but we also conduct public education in these areas in an effort to gain compliance from bicyclists and motorists alike. Our enforcement efforts include targeted enforcement efforts conducted by our Traffic Unit through grant funds from the Office of Transportation Safety. Our patrol officers are also encouraged to conduct bicycle related enforcement as part of their normal patrol duties. Such enforcement encounters afford the officer an opportunity to use their discretion, weighing the pros and cons, as to whether to issue a citation or release violators with a verbal warning.

**R-02:** *The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of all cities within the County that do not already have a Bicycle Advisory Commission/Committee establish one to perform such tasks as:*

- *Identify roads in need of bicycle lanes*
- *Research federal, State, and other funding sources for projects related to bicycle infrastructure and use*
- *Issue motor vehicle and bicycle public safety announcements*
- *Promote use of bicycles as a viable form of transportation and for health and ecological reasons*
- *Offer safety education and bike rodeos for children*
- *Provide liaison between city councils, transportation agencies, and the community on bicycle-related issues and concerns*
- *Assist in the development and dissemination of educational materials related to bicycle laws and safety*
- *Review and comment on private development plans that include bicycle facilities or have an impact on bicycle safety and access*
- *Review and promote the enforcement of city and State laws related to bicycle safety*
- *Encourage the public to register bicycles and keep a record of the serial numbers to facilitate the return of stolen or lost bicycles.*

Response to R-02: The City of Ventura has an ad-hoc bicycle focus group that was instrumental in the preparation of the 2011 Bicycle Master Plan. Staff continues to meet with that group when necessary and will be meeting with them regularly to update the Bicycle Master Plan in 2015-16.

**R-03:** *The Grand Jury recommends the County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of all cities within the County, continually promote bicycle laws and safety to people of all ages, concentrating on school-age children through events such as bike rodeos, bicycle rallies, and other educational activities.*

Response to R-03: The City partners with the Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) and community partners such as VCCool to develop bicycle safety education programs and put on bicycle rodeos. The City and VUSD are currently working on developing a bicycle safety

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education program that will be integrated into the middle school physical education curriculum. This project is funded from City and Ventura County Transportation Commission funding.

**R-04:** *The Grand Jury recommends the County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of all cities within the County use local media (e.g. public service announcements, public events and government websites) to educate the motor vehicle driving public and bicyclists of their responsibility to know and obey bicycle-related laws.*

Response to R-04: Agree. Using various sources of media (traditional and social) is an effective way of getting bicycle safety information to the public. The City utilizes these sources as staff resources and funding allow.

On July 27, 2015 the Ventura City Council approved this Grand Jury report response and authorized the Mayor to make this reply. We appreciate the Grand Jury's efforts in looking into this important matter.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Heitmann  
Mayor