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LOG OF TELEPHONE CALLS
DIRECTORATE FOR ENGINEERING SCIENCES

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH: Mr. John Sutter, East Bay Regional Park District, Oakland, CA

SUBJECT: Bells on bicycles

DATE OF CALL: March 9-10, 1998

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Scott Heh, ESME /K

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

March 9, 1998

I called Mr. Sutter to talk about his letter to Chairman Brown requesting that the Commission require all new bicycles be sold with pre-attached bells. Mr. Sutter told me that from his experience on their park trails, bicycles can be a problem for pedestrians, other bicyclists, and horseback riders. He believes all bicycles should have bells so that bicyclists can warn others in their path that a bicycle is approaching. Mr. Sutter thinks this would help to avoid collisions of bicyclists with other bicyclists, pedestrians, and horseback riders. He also stated that it could reduce injuries that occur when pedestrians leap and fall after being suddenly frightened by an overcoming bicyclist. This problem also occurs with people on horseback, since horses can be spooked by a sudden pass by a bicyclist.

I told Mr. Sutter that I understood his points and that there are likely situations that occur, especially on public use trails, where the use of a bell may help to avoid a collision and an injury. I further said that in order for the Commission to pursue a mandatory rule, we would need to make certain findings that provide strong support for the rule. To make these findings, we would need detailed data that describes the extent of the problem and we would need to examine if the rule would be effective in reducing injuries. For example, a requirement that all bicycles have bells would not necessarily influence people to use the bells, or even to keep the bells on their bikes. I told him that in my personal estimation, we do not now have sufficient information to support a mandatory rulemaking. I said that we would be interested in reviewing any information and data he can provide that would help us look into this issue. He said he would see what he could do and that I should also contact their park system Director of Public Safety, Chief Pete Sarna.

March 10, 1998

Chief Sarna was out of the office when I called. I left a detailed message to get back to me if he could provide us with any information on this issue.