Outlook

Public Comment - 8/20/26 Board Meeting

From Warren Wells <warren@marinbike.org>
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To MCE Clerk <clerk@mcecleanenergy.org>

1 attachment (531 KB)
Public Comment - 8.20.2026 Board Meeting - E-bike incentives.pdf;

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Please see attached a public comment on behalf of:

Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Bike East Bay
Napa County Bicycle Coalition
El Cerrito/Richmond Annex Walk & Roll

Thank you!

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Warren J. Wells, AICP
Policy & Planning Director
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
phone/text (410) 703-9898 | marinbike.org

We're creating a healthy, connected, and sustainable Marin by promoting bicycling for everyday transportation and recreation. Love to ride? Join MCBC today!

August 20, 2026

Chair Scales-Preston and Members of the Board,

We write to you to urge that MCE consider adopting an e-bike incentive program in its next annual budget, similar to those implemented by other regional CCAs and local governments across the country.

Over 1/3rd of California's GHG emissions originate from the transportation sector, a majority of which is accounted for by private automobiles. While electrification of the automotive fleet is a key step, according to the 2022 California Air Resources Board (CARB) Scoping Plan, vehicle electrification alone is not sufficient to meet GHG reduction goals. To achieve those goals, the state must reduce overall driving (measured by Vehicle Miles Traveled, or VMT) by 25% below 2019 levels by 2030, and 30% below 2019 levels by 2045. Accomplishing these goals will require strategies to facilitate mobility by other clean modes of transportation.

An e-bike incentive program in Denver, CO, which gave successful applicants $400 toward the purchase of an e-bike (or $1,200 if income qualified) found that participants rode their bikes 26 miles per week, replacing 3.4 round trip vehicle trips, reducing GHG emissions while having other co-benefits such as improving air quality and reducing traffic.

Other Bay Area CCAs have implemented incentive programs like the one we propose. Ava Clean Energy, which covers Alameda and San Joaquin Counties, has implemented a wildly successful e-bike incentive program, which was initially co-founded by Alameda County Transportation Commission and recently extended using only Ava Clean Energy funding. The program, which operates on a lottery basis among qualified applicants, offers between $400-900 depending on the bicycle (or up to $1,500 for income qualified applicants). As of May 2026, over 5,700 e-bikes had been purchased through the program, with 96% of respondents indicating that the incentive was the "primary reason" they purchased the e-bike, highlighting that cost is a barrier to adoption. The program is highly efficient, with 86% of program costs going to ratepayers.

In addition to shifting trips to clean modes, e-bike incentive programs have the benefit of driving investment in local bike shops rather than funding automakers with dubious politics. Furthermore, by incentivizing consumers to purchase legal e-bikes from local retailers, the program serves to crowd out dangerous, overpowered e-motos purchased online that have been a hot button issue across California.

MCE currently provides incentives for purchasers of electric cars through its EV Instant Rebate program. Eligible applicants receive $3,500 for the purchase or lease of a new EV or PHEV, or $2,000 for a used vehicle. MCE contracts with Energy Solutions to administer this program, and recently extended the program with another $3.6M in funding, in addition to the nearly $7M spent between FY23-26.

While this program serves an important role in getting EVs into the hands of MCE's ratepayers, we see several areas in which an e-bike incentive program could compare favorably.

Very High Program Costs
The recently approved EV Instant Rebate program extension with Energy Solutions includes a $1,210 management fee per incentive granted. This represents nearly 30% of the total program cost, a significantly higher rate compared to the Ava Clean Energy e-bike incentive program, which has an administrative cost of 14%.

E-bike Incentives Go Farther
MCE's extension of the EV Instant Rebate is modeled to provide incentives for 876 drivers, or an average of $2,811 per recipient (not including in administrative fees discussed above). As of May 2026, Ava Clean Energy had disbursed 5,783 incentives at a cost of just under $5M, or an average of $862 per recipient, meaning that the funds needed to subsidize a single EV/PHEV purchase can cover more than three e-bike purchases.

Consumer Burden on EVs is Still High
While a $3,000 EV incentive is a meaningful cost reduction, it still represents a fairly small share of the total purchase price of a new EV (a larger problem now with the phase-out of the federal EV tax credit). The base price for a standard Nissan Leaf, a vehicle on the lower end of the cost spectrum, is $30,000. This means that the incentive recipient would need to put up the other $27,000, or a 90% match to a 10% grant. The economics are somewhat more favorable for used cars, but a 2022 Nissan Leaf with 40k miles will likely cost ~$15,000, requiring $13,000 in participant matching.

By comparison, the comparatively cheap e-bike incentives have the ability to cover closer to 50% of the purchase price of an e-bike, and (importantly) require approximately $1,000 in participant matching. This lower cost burden opens up the program to a far wider range of potential applicants.

Higher Uptake in Wealthier Communities
Between FY23-26, MCE awarded 2,388 EV rebates in its 4-county service area. Roughly 2/3rd were received by Contra Costa residents, who make up 58% of the service area population. Though Marin County accounts for only 13% of the service area population, its residents received 17% of the rebates. This was 2.5x times the uptake rate in Solano County, which received only 12% of rebates despite making up nearly a quarter of MCE service area population. There are no doubt a number of reasons why this is the case, but Marin's relative wealth and the fact that EVs require a large personal match likely contribute.

In closing, we ask that a consideration of an e-bike incentive program be agendized at a future meeting in advance of next year's budget discussions. Such a program need not come at the expense of the EV Instant Rebate program, but we make the above points to highlight how important an e-bike incentive program can be in achieving MCE's mission, namely confronting the climate crisis by eliminating fossil fuel greenhouse gas emissions and creating equitable community benefits.

We thank you for your time and consideration, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss such a program further with the board or staff.

Sincerely,

Warren J. Wells
Policy & Planning Director
Marin County Bicycle Coalition

Dani Lanis
Advocacy Manager
Bike East Bay

Kara Vernor
Executive Director
Napa County Bicycle Coalition

Carrie Schulman
Coordinating Committee Member
El Cerrito/Richmond Annex Walk & Roll