

# Scooters on collision course with walkers, lawmakers

By Jim Sallis, The Conversation

Electric scooters are appearing in many major cities across the country, including South Lake Tahoe, bringing fun to riders, profits to scooter makers – and lots of potential risks to walkers and riders.

San Diego, where I live, is at the forefront of the proliferation of electric rideables, and as a physical activity researcher I am an interested observer. Recently, I was enjoying a stroll on the boardwalk when a couple of electric scooters zoomed past. As I saw a young girl start walking across the boardwalk, another scooter zipped by, and I could tell it would not be able to stop in time. The young woman riding the scooter was able to act quickly. Instead of crashing into the girl at full speed, she fell down with the scooter and slid to a stop. There was a crash and minor injuries to the rider, but a tragedy was avoided.

I consider this event a warning about the dangers posed by the electric vehicles that have rapidly become commonplace on local boardwalks and sidewalks. An online search will reveal many reports of injuries. A Dallas woman went to the emergency room for head injuries the week of July 9, and officials in Nashville are considering legislation there that would require registration for scooters.

Several issues emerge from this new mode of transportation, including whether riders should be required to wear helmets and whether the vehicles should be allowed on sidewalks. And, should drivers be permitted to use them while under the influence? I want to warn local government leaders, electric-rideable companies, and users of sidewalks about the three

ways that electric scooters can harm health.

## **How electric rideables can harm health**

Have the rideables come to your neighborhood yet? They will. A market research company predicted electric scooters alone will grow from a \$14 billion global market in 2014 to \$37 billion in 2024. Bird and Lime, the two biggest scooter makers and both based in California, have placed scooters in nearly 30 U.S. cities in recent months, leasing them to riders seeking a thrill – or an alternative to ride-sharing.

There are many variations of one-, two-, three- and four-wheeled vehicles that share one major flaw. They all go too fast. Scooters go 15 mph, and electric skateboards, mini-motorcycles and one-wheeled devices can go faster.

The problem is that pedestrians walk 3-4 miles per hour, or slower. This means scooters are traveling four times as fast. If there is a clear path, the riders are going at full speed, because that is where the fun and thrills are. But considering the speed, weight of the devices and weight of the rider (sometimes two riders), the result is a dangerous force.

In a collision, the pedestrian will always be the loser. Putting these speeding motorized vehicles alongside pedestrians is a disaster waiting to happen. I could not find much data on injuries from electric rideables, but a study using the U.S. National Electronic Injury Surveillance System reported 26,854 injuries to children from hoverboards alone in 2015 and 2016.

A second way that electric rideables can harm health is by reducing walking. Ads for the devices claim they reduce car trips and carry public transit riders the first and last mile of trips.

But do they? I challenge the companies to provide evidence about this. Based on my observations, the devices mainly

replace walking with riding. And it is well documented that low physical activity is one of the biggest health threats worldwide, being a major contributor to epidemics of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancers, dementia, etc.

The third way electric rideables can harm health is by making sidewalks hostile territory for pedestrians. Though scooters and other rideables are not allowed on the sidewalks, almost all the rides I see are occurring on sidewalks. If speeding electric vehicles become common on sidewalks, then I predict pedestrians will stay away. Our research group based at UC San Diego has shown that the better sidewalks and street crossings are designed for pedestrian safety and comfort, the more people of all ages walk for transportation.

Thus, I am concerned that competing with electric vehicles will make sidewalks less safe and comfortable for pedestrians. The U.S. already has among the lowest rates of walking and bicycling for transportation in the world. Will we now turn over the sidewalks to electric vehicles and further reduce our activity levels?

Walking is already too dangerous. About 6,000 pedestrians were killed in 2017. The Governors Highway Safety Association reported that the number of pedestrian fatalities increased 27 percent from 2007 to 2016, while at the same time, all other traffic deaths decreased by 14 percent. Clearly, the roads are not safe for pedestrians, so shouldn't we protect sidewalks as a safe place for walking?

### **A quick fix: Slow things down**

Local governments are actively working on responses to this obvious new danger. The first step in San Diego has been to enforce requirements for helmets, speed and single riders on the boardwalk. I have seen no such enforcement on sidewalks just a couple of blocks away. This infographic with safety instructions for electric rideable use is a good start to

education for riders.

I have some further recommendations that will support safe use of electric rideables while improving conditions for walking and bicycling.

Let's start by declaring sidewalks the domain of pedestrians, with motorized devices limited to those used by people with disabilities (#sidewalks4pedestrians). At least on sidewalks, the rights of pedestrians should come before the rights of vehicle riders.

Electric rideables should be allowed wherever bicycles are legal, which are bike facilities, lanes, protected bike paths and on the streets, but not on sidewalks. But there's a problem with bikes and rideables on the streets – riding on the streets is not as safe as it could be on bicycles or rideables.

I envision a win-win scenario in which electric vehicle companies and bicycle advocates join together to advocate for rapidly building networks of protected bicycle facilities that can also be used by rideables. Most U.S. cities are unsafe for bicycling, so improvements are needed. Some of the electric rideable companies have market values of more than \$1 billion, so they have the capacity to lobby cities for infrastructure that will safely accommodate their products.

I expect bicycle, pedestrian, health and environmental advocates would be happy to work with electric rideable companies to achieve long-sought goals for safe bicycling that are likely to produce more bicycling, less traffic congestion, fewer carbon emissions and healthier people. The electric rideable phenomenon is very new but growing rapidly, so the need for research on electric rideables is as urgent as the need for action. We need evidence to guide policies that will ensure electric rideables do not harm health and will possibly improve health.

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## **Sports being added to Winter Olympics**

Seven sports will be added to the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing.

Four of these sports are International Ski Federation (FIS) events that will be on show at the 2019 Snowboard, Freestyle and Freeski World Championships in Utah.

Those are: freestyle skiing, mixed team aerials; freeski big air, men's and women's; and in snowboard, team snowboardcross.

Rounding out the latest additions to the Olympic Winter Games is the freestyle skiing mixed team aerials event under the lights at Deer Valley in February 2019. The 2019 World Championships will be the first time it will be included in the FIS World Championship program.

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# USFS to celebrate 50 years of trails

Eldorado National Forest is hosting an event at the former high-elevation Olympic training center at Echo Summit on Aug. 25 from 9:30am-3pm to celebrate the National Trails System which turns 50 this year.

The event will be at Adventure Mountain Lake Tahoe on Highway 50. It will feature guest speakers, information displays and guided hiking opportunities. Registration is required for this free event. Space is limited to 150 participants. No food will be provided. For event details and to register, go **online**.

The three national trails that cross Echo Summit are the California Emigrant Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and the Pacific Crest Trail.

Representatives from the Oregon-California Trail Association, the Pony Express Association, and the Pacific Crest Trail Association will highlight the history of the trails with guest speakers and information displays. There will also be a reading from "The Track in the Forest" by Sacramento author Bob Burns about the 1968 Olympic training that took place at Echo Summit.

The Eldorado National Forest Interpretive Association, Tahoe Rim Trail Association, the El Dorado Backcountry Ski Patrol, and the Eldorado National Forest will also have information displays at the Get Outdoors Echo Summit event.

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# High meadow a bike ride back into history



Old buildings are the reward at the end of the 4.5-mile trek.  
Photo/Bob Sweatt

**By Bob Sweatt**

After reading a recent article about the Forni Meadows land acquisition from private ownership to the U.S. Forest Service, I, along with a couple friends, decided to check it out. The transfer of ownership included 835 acres nestled above Highway 50 off Wright's Lake road.

The Forni family used the meadow for cattle grazing during the summer months. There are still remnants of the cattle ranch along with four small cabins standing, one of which is supposed to have been built in 1862. Although all these cabins looked the same and it is hard to see how one of them would survive so many hard winters, I will go with the information that was published. It is also possible that the original



cabin is in another location, but most all of the meadow is visible. The article did say there were buildings as well as two barns; I didn't see any barns, only four small buildings.



The Eldorado National Forest took possession of the land this month. Photo/Bob Sweatt

Finding the road to start the trek was relatively easy. I simply went to Google earth, found the Meadows (upper and lower) and went back to Wright's lake road where an old road split off at the top of the grade going up Wright's lake road. This is approximately 25 miles from the Y in South Lake Tahoe. It is FS Road 11N28Y.

The road up to the meadows is a typical mountain road, with lots of ruts and debris. By the way, you will only be able to go about 0.3 miles before running into a gate, so you might as well park on Wrights Lake since there is a marker there saying no motorized vehicles.

We elected to take our bikes and ride the 4.5-mile trek. The grade is a little steep at first with a lot of sand, so take it easy. Toward the top, about 1.5 miles from the meadow, the



road levels out and is much easier. Along the way you will be treated to wildflowers and views of meadows and mountains. The elevation at the meadow is 7,560 feet, so the flowers were still pretty good, however a trek two weeks earlier would have been much better for the flower display.



Views are delightful for most of the way. Photo/Bob Sweatt

There is one little spring that runs across the road when you get to the meadow. On the way out I was pleasantly surprised to see something jump in front of me which had a lot of yellow. At first I thought it was a salamander, but after finding it, it turned out to be a frog. Hmm, I wondered, could this be the endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog which is supposed to reside here? Well, when I got home I sent a pic to a friend who did identify it as the rare little fella. What a way to exit the meadows.

Another treat was running into a covey of quail on the way up which had to include, I'm thinking two dozen little chicks. These guys were small enough that they had recently hatched. Mom and dad were not very happy with us, and kept very close to us to make sure we didn't get any closer.

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# **Dream job brings nightmare challenge for USOC chief**

**By Steve Keating, Reuters**

Sarah Hirshland landed her dream job when she was named chief executive of the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) on Thursday, but she faces a nightmare situation in her new role dealing with the aftermath of a massive sex abuse scandal.

She fills the post previously held by Scott Blackmun, who resigned for medical reasons amid criticism stemming from the sex abuse scandal involving ex-USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar.

Described as passionate, innovative and a skilled negotiator, Hirshland's ability to make deals will be a huge asset with sponsorship and marketing rights to be put in place for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

**[Read the whole story](#)**

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# **Fire restrictions in the Tahoe National Forest**

The Tahoe National Forest enacted fire restrictions on July 16 based on an analysis of current fuel conditions and weather observations. This analysis revealed the potential to support large fire growth across the Tahoe National Forest.

Tahoe National Forest Fire Restrictions are as follows:

- No open fires, campfires, or charcoal fires are allowed on Tahoe National Forest lands outside of designated areas, even with a valid California Campfire Permit.
- Lanterns and portable stoves using gas, jellied petroleum, or pressurized liquid fuel are allowed, unless otherwise restricted, with a valid California Campfire Permit.
- No smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle, building, designated recreation site or while stopped in an area at least 3 feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material.
- Internal combustion engines are restricted to National Forest System roads, trails, and areas, as identified on the Tahoe National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (including the Prosser Pits Developed Off-Highway Vehicle Area). Motorized cross-country travel between roads, trails, and areas is prohibited.

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## **Romo captures first Tahoe celebrity golf tourney**



Tony Romo at the driving range before the 2018 ACC tournament. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Former Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo on July 15 won the American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe.

This is the first time for Romo, who has played in the celebrity golf tournament five times, to win the event. He had finished second three times.

The Tahoe tourney uses the Stableford scoring format. Romo finished with 71 points, while former Cardinals pitcher Mark Mulder was second with 68. Mulder was the champion for the last three years.

Joe Pavelski, San Jose Sharks captain, finished tied for third with former NBA player Ray Allen with 66 points. Pavelski was atop the leader board the first two days.

Romo declined the \$125,000 first prize check so he could retain his amateur status. The money will be donated to the tournament's charities. He will be attempting to qualify for the U.S. Amateur on Monday at Mascoutin Golf Club in Berlin, Wis.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

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# Are seasonal employees in ski towns underpaid?

By Matt McDonald, Powder

If you've held a seasonal ski resort job you understand what it is to slide along the poverty line in a little corner of paradise that caters to the not-yous. Forget saving money. You need to score three more shifts this week to pay rent on Monday. Bills loom. If you stop long enough to remember you turn 26 in two weeks, knocking you off your parents' health insurance, your head explodes.

Then, your employer announces another sparkling partnership with three new resorts, plus \$50 million in capital improvements that include a hotel and mid-mountain sushi bar. Sure, you'll get a raise if you stay for another season, but at a quarter an hour, it feels more like a gesture than a game-changer. But hey, at least you ski for free, right?

**Read the whole story**

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# Algae bloom at Wright's Lake a concern

By Dawn Hodson, Mountain Democrat

Concerns over an algae bloom at Wright's Lake resulted in a



call to the Central Valley Water Board to conduct water samples.

According to staff at the Eldorado National Forest, a member of the public visited the lake on June 28 and observed a subsurface algal bloom that appeared to extend throughout the lake.

**Read the whole story**

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## Celebrity golf madness takes over Edgewood



Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles on July 12



signs an autograph for Nicholas McClelland. Photo/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

STATELINE – Steph Curry wields a golf club better than the average player, but what he excels at over most is performing at a high caliber in the raucous atmosphere known at the American Century Championship.

He said playing professional basketball in boisterous arenas, especially on the road where there are thousands of people booing him has helped train him to stay focused on the job at hand. The Golden State Warriors' star said he thrives in an electric setting like the Tahoe celebrity golf tournament.

Things are much different for Curry compared to when he first showed up at this tournament in 2010. Then the Warriors weren't much to brag about and Curry was far from a household name. Now the Warriors hold claim to being the NBA champions three out of the last four years and Curry is easily the most heralded athlete in the Bay Area, with a following that extends to Tahoe and beyond.



Dell and Steph Curry talk golf and basketball. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Curry is in town this week on a quest to do better than his fourth-place finish in 2017. The three-day tournament, now in its 29th year, starts today. For the past few days there were practice rounds and a pro-am at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

For the McClelland family of Fresno they have been coming here for a handful of years just for this tournament.

Nicholas, 10, was doing his best to gather as many signatures as possible. Curry, though, is his favorite.

Three years ago the youngster called out to "Mr. Curry," and was then called onto the course by his idol and given an autographed dollar bill.

For dad Jeff he was pretty excited that year to have Curry pose with all three of his sons. "That was pretty special," the elder McClelland told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Former NFL star Charles Woodson practices his long game; with his golf club cover seeming to watch the action. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Autograph seeking is a big part of what enthralls fans.

Chris Webber, who had two short stints with the Warriors but who is better known for his playing days with the Sacramento Kings, was darting from the driving range area to the putting green on July 12 when fans tried to sidetrack him. He signed a few autographs before saying he'd be back and get to everyone.



Most of the 80-plus athletes, Hollywood stars, and other celebrities at the tournament are good about accommodating their fans as much as possible.



Charles Barkley has a unique swing.  
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Only a few are serious golfers, like former quarterback Tony Romo, who with former pitcher Mark Mulder are favored to win the event. Mulder has won the ACC the last three years.

At the driving range on Thursday Romo was one of the more serious athletes. Not far from him though was the antithesis –

Charles Barkley. Oddsmakers give this former basketball great 6,000-to-1 odds to win this year.

Barkley was telling his caddy he needed 18 balls for Thursday's round. He didn't appear to be joking.

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**Notes:**

- For details about the tournament, go **online**.