

Item 10 - Public Comment

Denise Merleno

From: Cindy Winter [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 4:43 PM
To: Denise Merleno
Subject: Comment for Board meeting tomorrow: "Free bike share"
Attachments: TAM BOARD MEETING February 23.pdf

Hi Denise,

Alas I have a conflict tomorrow evening, thus cannot attend. So here's what I'd say if I were there.

Thank you for distributing, and I'll watch the meeting later on tape. Have a good one!

Cindy

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TAM BOARD MEETING

February 23, 2020

Agenda Item 10: Plan Bay Area 2050 Free Shared Bikes (Page 134)

I believe the free shared bikes are meant to advance the Plan's goal of equity. Laudable as it is, I am concerned that certain problems inherent in providing shared bikes, whether free or fee-based, may have gone unrecognized by the planners.

Sometime in 2017, Google began providing free bikes for its employees to use when their work required them to travel within the vast campus. These bikes soon began appearing beyond the campus, on the streets of Mountain View. Newspaper reports from the time describe a cavalier approach to private property appropriation.

Many bikes never found their way back to Google. They were left scattered around the city or taken home, dumped in a creek or piled in pick-up trucks and driven off to points as distant as Ventura and Los Angeles. Some were seen for sale on e-Bay and Craig's List. Others were used as convenient sources of free spare parts.

How accurate these news reports were I cannot judge. Perhaps they were somewhat exaggerated -- drama always sells. Recently I spoke with a clerk in a well-known bike shop in Mountain View, and corresponded with the E.D. of the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, and neither knew what I was talking about. I'm wondering whether Google resorted to geo-fencing.

Mountain View and Palo Alto have had difficulty with paid bike share. San Francisco seems to be pretty happy with Jump bikes, although other cities have been less successful. As reported in Techcrunch.com, 09.13.19:

“This is all to say micromobility is not an easy business. Between regulatory hurdles, potential vandalism and faulty batteries, there are a number of factors that can stand in the way of success.”

What the experience will be with free bike share is anybody's guess. For that reason, MTC grants should start experimentally, in one or two small locations. Advocating noble goals is easy. Solving real-life problems is much harder.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Winter

<https://www.sfweekly.com/news/stolen-google-bikes-litter-mountain-view/>

“The word on the street is, if you want a free bike just drive to Mountain View...People are scooping them up, sometimes in pickup trucks.” July 24, 2017. Be sure to watch the KRON report!

<https://sf.curbed.com/2018/1/12/16884460/google-bikes-stolen-bicycles-tech-gbikes> “How Google accidentally provided free bike share for its Mountain View neighbors.”