



MARIN COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION

June 24, 2021

Board President Pahre and Members of the GGBHTD Board of Directors:

The Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC) is writing to express our concern about the safety impact to bicycle users brought about by the Golden Gate Bridge wind retrofit project. We request that the Bridge District commit to (1) evaluating the additional wind impact on riders on the West Sidewalk and (2) improve the process by which crashes are reported and evaluated so that the Board of Directors is better informed on both the number and the rate of crashes on the Bridge.

Riding a bicycle on the bridge is already a challenge. According to data from the Bridge District, on a per-trip basis **bridge users are 5 times as likely to crash when crossing on a bike as in an automobile and 21 times as likely to be injured.**

We are concerned that this disparate crash rate will only worsen following the installation of the new bridge railing. Since the beginning of the wind retrofit MCBC has fielded a worrying number of complaints from riders who have experienced far higher wind speeds than they were previously used to. A non-scientific survey we conducted found that, among over 456 respondents, **84% said that the new railing made the bridge worse to ride over on high wind days, with 62% saying it was "much worse."**

Even more troubling, **59 respondents have had a crash on the bridge in *this year alone***, only one of which was reported to the District (despite six of them requiring medical care). Through May 2021, the GM's reports only describe seven bike crashes on the bridge, a significant undercount.

Below are quotes from several respondents who crashed on the bridge in recent months. Particularly striking, and disturbing, is that women and riders with smaller bodies appear to be impacted disproportionately.

*My office is in Sausalito and my home is in San Francisco. A few weeks ago I was cycling home and the wind was so bad on the bridge that I had to get off my bike at the midpoint of the bridge and walk the rest of the way. I have cycled the bridge thousands of times and had never had to do that before...I weigh 97 pounds and could feel my bike tilting over from the wind. Since then I will only ride on the bridge if there is no wind forecast.
F.P., San Francisco*

While biking on a moderately windy day in May (2021), a sudden gust of wind thrust my bike into the railing and I scratched my hand on the metal. I got off my bike to walk the rest of the way, but as a lightweight person, it was tricky to keep my balance...For the duration of getting across the middle of the bridge I had to keep one hand on my bike and just pray I wouldn't fall over.

D.B., San Francisco

I was riding on the west side of the bridge around 2:00pm. The wind was so bad that my bike was being pushed to the east side of the walkway. When I passed [the Marin Tower] the wind hit me so hard that it blew my wheel out from under me. I went down straight on my shoulder and people coming the opposite direction had to swerve to miss me which also made them crash into the side walls. The wind situation has really sucked the fun out of riding across the bridge... It's scary... I can't even imagine what it would be like to try to navigate as someone who is not experienced on bikes.

Maddie Hines, San Francisco

MCBC asks that the Bridge District study the additional impact on riders brought about by the new railing. Previous responses from staff that “winds...already reach high speeds on a regular basis” ignores the obvious (and intentional) byproduct of the wind retrofit project, namely that more wind energy passes through to the West Sidewalk.

Additionally, we request the Bridge District put more effort into collecting statistics about the number of riders crashing on the bridge. There appears to be a serious under-reporting problem in the figures presented in the GM's report. This must be remedied. Problematically, only a monthly snapshot of crashes is provided, permitting no year-over-year or time-series analysis. If crashes are increasing due to the wind retrofit, the Bridge District leadership needs to know about it

We would never want to put the Golden Gate Bridge in any danger and support efforts to ensure its soundness. However, in doing so the safety of the *users* of the bridge must not be ignored. **It is unacceptable that the wind retrofit project ultimately discourages people from riding a bicycle across the Golden Gate Bridge and endangers those that do so.** In a time of climate crisis, the stewards of our transportation infrastructure need to be planning for *vastly more* low- and zero-GHG trips, which means making those trips more convenient and safer. By all appearances, this project does the opposite, making trips by bicycle more difficult and more dangerous.

Sincerely,



Warren Wells
Policy & Planning Director