

**Public Comment at Pinellas County Commissioners Meeting**  
**January 14, 2025**  
**Irene Davis**

**Excerpts of Responses from my Jan 4 Next Door posting**

Hello neighbors. I am wondering if others are concerned about the gang of 15-20 kids riding the busy Pinellas trail on bikes, e-bikes and gas powered mini bikes-that have been yelling at people, spitting on them, popping wheelies in front of them, playing chicken and putting pedestrians, other riders and young children at risk. My husband complained at the police station and was told there wasn't much they can do besides give them citations.

If anyone has read The Tipping Point, you'll appreciate the analogy. This has been going on for some time and will only get worse as these kids know nothing can be done. It will take a young child getting run over and severely injured or someone killed before any real action is taken.

We need police presence on the trail so people can enjoy it as it was intended. Is there a town meeting we can attend to voice these concerns, should we start a petition? Open to suggestions!

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This post received 150 responses in the first 24 hours, and nearly 400 responses to date

Here are some excerpts:

' Yes. I too have been spat up and verbally abused on the Pinellas Trail. I regard such shenanigans as assault. Are the commissioners addressing the issue? And where are the police?'

' Yes been going on for years, if I catch them they will need an ambulance for transport.'

'The trail is a destination for retired cyclists that come to the area specifically to ride it and they share information in online cyclists groups and forums. This bad behavior is not good for tourism'

'i was slapped on the back of the head by one of these ruffians and fell off my bike. I now have 2 herniated discs to remind me. I have not been on the trail since, A gem of a trail right out our door and we need to be afraid to use it is an outrage . I know the police are busy but when some kid gets seriously hurt or killed I wonder which politician will step up.'

'I posted the same message a week ago, and low and behold I counted 13 kids on e-bikes going at least 20-25 miles a hour doing wheelies paying no attention to traffic light at Michigan and Bay Shore. I have no problem with kids getting together and riding on the trail, just be respectful to other riders and walkers.'

'you are correct and I've heard the stories also of them not only playing chicken with pregnant women, but elderly ladies. It is disgusting and concerning & about time is something be done about it... It's been close to a year and a half I believe'

'Saw them the other day. EXTREMELY DANGEROUS and threatening. they were on the trail with motorized vehicles, driving in a reckless manner. That's against the law, and extremely dangerous to the peace loving and vulnerable folks that are enjoying the trail.'

'I did happen to see this large group of children passing by Eli's barbecue yesterday. They were a little too aggressive considering there was a lot of elderly people walking and they had to stop in their tracks because they didn't know which way to even go because the group took over the entire space. As a courtesy when you're on an e-bike and there's a large group of people that you're approaching you should minimize your speed until you pass. The children actually sped up, did stunts on their bikes and nearly hit several people.'

'If it's the same group of kids that I almost ran into while cycling because one of the kids decided to stay on my right side almost crashing him at 20 mph then yes something needs to be done! I had to ride over to the grassy area to avoid the collision'

'All they try and do is start problems whenever they see other people. I've seen them hit cars while doing their stupid wheelies and keep going without hesitation, I've seen them harassing older people out for a walk by then self's, and countless times they've said stuff to me trying to get a reaction. There's nothing more I want to see than kids out riding bikes like the good old days but the issue is their lack of respect for other people and blatant attempts to antagonize most people they pass.'

'we have witnessed this same intimidation from a gang of kids. They got in my husband face and told him to say something he would not say, finally one of the kids said c' mon leave him alone, they than approached an older ladies sitting on a bench and tried to intimidation her.'

'Spitting on someone in Florida is considered battery, which is an assault. Battery is a first-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. A second offense can be prosecuted as a third-degree felony, with penalties of up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine'

' They have already knocked people off their bikes'

'Some of the kids in these bike gangs are mouthy punks that have no love in their hearts nor respect for others. Their motivation is to annoy and threaten. They cut in front of you, riding well above the speed limit, and shout insults as they cowardly race by. What parent would gift a nice e-bike to a punk like that? They are not just "boys being boys". They are boys trying to be thugs'

'I've had the most bike gang encounters one to two blocks north of Mainstreet. Usually they are heading north, getting off the trail near Mainstreet. I've seen them on the sidewalks and peeling rubber at the Park right near Bon Appetite.'

'They just about took me out on the trail between Palm and Curlew. Motorbikes naughty bikes! Young kids. One wore a mask so you couldn't tell who he was. I tried to get a video but they were moving too quickly.'

'As a past member of BPAC and constantly bringing to the attention of the authorities - FDOT & Pinellas county this issue and many others, there is no initiative or ideas as to address the issues appertaining to the trail. They even removed poles and now golf carts can be seen driving on the trail. (I cycle 100 miles on the trail each week). There is an increase of motorized vehicles on the trail in that electric non pedal assist bikes. To me there is no difference between a gas or electric propelled vehicle!'

'Also talked to a guy who told me he was harassed and threatened in Hammock Park. They said they were going to run him over and kill his dog. Another incident they were banging on metal fence where there's animal and threw firecrackers in there'.

'Not just on the trail. There are 2-4 underage kids on mini bikes, atv, even a lawn mower out on S Lake Dr virtually everyday. They pop wheelies & other tricks in the middle of traffic. They run the stop lights, pull out in front of traffic. These kids are not old enough to have driver licenses and the mini bikes, etc, they are riding are not registered and can't be. Police were contacted several times and also were provided with several video's showing what's going on. The police say they patrol the area looking to catch them but have been unsuccessful so far. This has been going on since August!'

'we have been riding on the trail several times and these gangs of kids start crap as they ride up to you. They were provocative and made rude comments at my fiancé. Completely disrespectful and there was no provocation whatsoever on our part. We were just riding the trail minding our own business'

'I'm done with the bike trail. They can play their game with someone else. At least when I encounter them on the road, my car is bigger than them & I can drive away. If they don't move, I'll not allow them to hurt me, I will keep on driving. it's not the enjoyable experience it used to be. It's also not worth getting injured & losing the time it might take to heal. I'm not getting any younger 😊. When the tourists or snow birds start complaining, maybe they'll finally station officers riding bikes on the trail. For now, I don't feel safe. Safety is my priority.'

'I was "attacked" (ie harassed/intimidated) during my run about a half mile south of Michigan yesterday just before sundown. They were going about 25 mph, many doing wheelies while barely missing me. For those of you who mention fighting back, it is NOT going to happen. There were about 8 of them, and a few were definitely riding aggressively. I did a loud deep yell of "SLOW DOWN!!!" out of instinct, surprised by how aggressively I yelled at them, but my initial thought afterwards was hoping (almost

praying) I didn't incite them into turning around to gang up on me. No matter how fit I am, I wouldn't be able to take on more than a couple of them at a time. My fear is without a concerted effort by the local community, these brats will push themselves farther into seeking "fun" and thrills.'

'I don't walk on the trail anymore'

'I used the trail for years and loved it. However, recently stopped using the Trail because it was unsafe for many reasons. People sleep on the trail, I am not objecting to that, but my safety comes first, and I didn't feel safe. I have the greatest memories of taking my husband for walks on the trail in his wheelchair. We need this beautiful trail. I would love to get back on it. Hopefully, a solution will be put into effect sooner than later.'

'I've heard mostly between curlew and Ozona. Although I have seen them at the Granada Publix in Dunedin. Some of them waited on the sidewalk where I happened to be parked picking up my legally blind son from work... One of them went inside and shortly after a man came out of the store yelling loudly while the kid followed him closely... The kid antagonized him in the store and then continued following him out of the store calling him "fat"... The man was probably early 30s and very angry and trying to control himself, but this kid was like 75 pounds soaking wet little punk ~just wouldn't relent and purposely winding him up following the man to his car. The man said that he had a gun and the little shit actually said "what are you gonna shoot a kid?? And started laughing" my windows were down and I was probably 30 feet away from where this was unfolding, and I yelled out to the kid that I think it was time for him to go and the others that were on the other side of my car on the sidewalk waiting for him laughing... Said oh sh\*\* it's time to go and got their bikes and took off, and the other kid went and got his bike and took off as well, but they were still doing wheelies through the parking lot and riding past people too fast and they just thought it was one big hilarious event. I felt so sorry for the adult man who did nothing to deserve this and had no control to stop them from being ridiculous.'

'I, at 76 , cannot use the trail safely.'

'used to be I could drive to crystal beach and ride north. Now I have to drive to withlacochee trail!'

'Someone will get hurt badly !! I feel in danger when riding my bike !!!.'

'How many times do we have to see this post? Of course concerned. So sad now even the trail isn't like it used to be. Darn out of control kids and parents if you ask me. There were some at Coachman Park a few months ago trying to knock people over and yelling at them'

'As I look through this long post and read about all of the confrontations. I truly believe that the local media should get involved and write up an article on this serious issue. I will post local media links later today and encourage everyone to contact them with yours stories and concerns.'