

CITY OF LA VISTA
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REPORT
APRIL 15, 2025 AGENDA

Subject:	Type:	Submitted By:
DISCUSSION – GOLF CAR POLICY	◆ RESOLUTION ORDINANCE RECEIVE/FILE	RITA RAMIREZ INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

SYNOPSIS

Following a citizen request to allow golf cars on city streets, this item is being placed on the agenda for discussion.

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A.

RECOMMENDATION

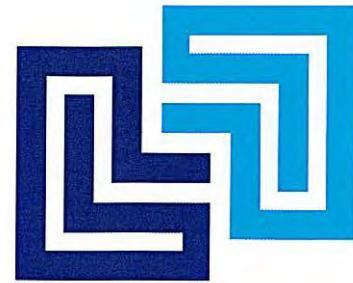
Review and direction from Council.

BACKGROUND

At the March 18, 2025 Council meeting a citizen addressed the Council asking them to consider adopting a policy that would allow the operation of golf cars on city streets. The Mayor and Council asked that staff provides some additional information and place the item on an upcoming agenda for discussion.

A group of staff members met and reviewed the State Statutes as well as the policies in place in the cities of Papillion, Ralston and Norfolk where limited use of golf cars on city streets is permitted. The information gathered is attached in a memo. After review and discussion by Council, if direction is given to prepare an ordinance staff will do so and bring it back at an upcoming meeting.

The gentleman who addressed Council has been informed that this item will be on the agenda for discussion.



MEMO

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Rita Ramirez, Interim City Administrator

DATE: 4/11/25

RE: Golf Car Policy Considerations

The City Council has requested information to consider whether an amendment to the municipal code that would permit the operation of golf cars on city streets is appropriate for La Vista. While some municipalities have adopted similar provisions, such regulations should be carefully evaluated in the context of La Vista's traffic conditions, infrastructure, and public safety considerations.

RELEVANT STATE STATUTES

Below are the relevant state statutes that address golf cars and their use on streets:

- *NE Rev. Stat 60-116.01 – Golf car vehicle, defined:* Golf car has a maximum level ground speed of 20 MPH, payload capacity of 1,200 lbs, max GVW of 2,500 lbs, maximum passenger capacity of 4, designed for operation on a golf course for sporting and recreational purposes.
- *NE Rev. Stat 60-6,381 – Golf car vehicles, city, village, or county; operation authorizes, restrictions; liability insurance:* City may adopt an ordinance allowing for operation of golf cars on streets (public way for purposes of vehicular travel, including entire area within the right-of-way) within corporate limits, between sunrise and sunset, on streets posted 35 MPH or less. Requires Class O Operator's license, owner shall have liability insurance (minimums are in statute, \$25,000 bodily injury or death one person, \$50,000 injury or death two more persons, \$25,000 injury to or destruction of property). Golf cars cannot operate in excess of 20 MPH, can cross higher speed streets at 90 degrees.

CASE STUDIES

Several nearby communities have permitted the use of golf carts, more narrowly defined and described as "golf cars", but with restrictions. The following are restrictions put in place by these communities for the use of golf cars on city roadways:

City of Papillion Use Restrictions

- They may only be driven on streets with speed limits of 25 mph or less and cannot be operated on highways or designated major roads
- Must be equipped with safety features such as seat belts, brake lights, turn signals, and a rearview mirror
- Operators must be at least 20 years old and possess a valid driver's license
- Liability insurance is mandatory, and all golf cars must be registered annually with the city
- Operation is only allowed between sunrise and sunset

City of Ralston Use Restrictions

- Must remain on streets with speed limits of 30 mph or lower and cannot be driven on major roads, including State Highway 85, 72nd Street, and L Street, among others
- They may only be used from March 1 to November 30
- Operators must be at least 20 years old and possess a valid driver's license
- Must be equipped with safety features such as seat belts, turn signals, rearview mirrors, and a safety flag
- Liability insurance is mandatory, and annual registration with the city is required

City of Norfolk Use Restrictions

- Golf cars may only operate on roads with speed limits of 25 mph or lower and are restricted from highways, trails, sidewalks, and non-designated park roads
- Maximum speed of 20 mph
- Maximum capacity of no more than four passengers
- Must be equipped with safety features such as seat belts, working brakes, operational lights, turn signals, a muffler, and a bicycle safety flag mounted five feet above ground
- Operators must be at least 18 years old, have a valid Class O driver's license, and obey all traffic laws
- Operation is only permitted between sunrise and sunset, with headlights and taillights required to be on
- Registration with the city is mandatory, and must be renewed each calendar year

When evaluating such changes in La Vista, below are some traffic safety concerns that should be considered.

TRAFFIC, SAFETY, & ENFORCEMENT CONCERNs

1. **Lack of Safety Features** – Golf carts are not manufactured to meet the safety standards and crash-test requirements of passenger motor vehicles. They generally lack essential safety features such as airbags, seat belts, turn signals, and proper lighting, which increases the risk of severe injuries in a collision.
2. **Speed Differentials and Traffic Flow** – Golf carts typically operate at speeds of 15-25 mph, whereas most city streets have speed limits that are higher. This creates a dangerous speed differential, leading to congestion, erratic driving behaviors, and/or an increased likelihood of rear-end collisions.
3. **Vulnerability in Collisions** – Due to their lightweight construction and open design, golf carts offer minimal protection to occupants in the event of a crash. Accidents involving larger vehicles, such as SUVs and trucks, would likely result in serious injuries and/or fatalities.
4. **Incompatibility with Winter and Adverse Weather Conditions** – Unlike standard vehicles, golf carts are not equipped to handle adverse weather conditions such as snow, ice, or heavy rain, which are common in Nebraska. This creates additional safety hazards for both golf cart operators and other road users.
5. **Enforcement and Liability Issues** – Allowing golf carts on city streets would present enforcement challenges for law enforcement officers, particularly regarding age restrictions, insurance requirements, and compliance with traffic laws. Additionally, the city could face increased liability exposure in the event of accidents involving golf carts.
6. **Potential Conflicts with Pedestrians and Sidewalk/Trail Use** – An increase in the number of golf carts owned and utilized within the city would likely also increase their use on trails and other locations where they are not intended or authorized to be driven. Golf carts operating on sidewalks or trails could create hazardous conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users. These areas are not designed for motorized vehicle use, increasing the risk of collisions, injuries, and congestion in recreational and pedestrian-heavy zones.
7. **Potential Violation of Driver Expectations** – Typical drivers are accustomed to encountering vehicles that comply with Department of Transportation (DOT)

standards, such as fully enclosed cars or motorcycles, which have recognizable features like headlights, taillights, ride heights, and distinct maneuverability or performance characteristics. To help alert drivers to the presence of non-standard vehicles, many municipalities require golf carts to fly a bike flag. However, the geometry of certain streets, particularly those with on-street parking, may prevent drivers from recognizing or anticipating a golf car's presence. The lack of recognizable vehicle features and potential blind spots could reduce a driver's ability to identify or respond appropriately to the golf car, increasing the risk of conflicts or crashes.