

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE DRAFT:

### Bill 52 (2024) RELATING TO ELECTRIC BICYCLES.

The **PROPOSED CD1** makes the following amendments:

- A. In SECTION 1 of the bill, adds to the purpose statement:
1. Detailed data from a study by the State of Hawai'i ("State") Department of Health concerning incidents and injuries involving electric bicycles on O'ahu, and their financial impact; and
  2. A statement that the City Council considers it necessary to protect bicycle operators and the public at large from such incidents with new safety requirements, while also acknowledging that the State Legislature plans to amend the Statewide Traffic Code in 2025 to address the issue, which may supersede requirement in this ordinance.
- B. In SECTION 2 of the bill:
1. Deletes the proposed new definition of "*Electric Bicycle*" in ROH Section 15-2.33; and
  2. Adds a new proposed definition of "*Motor*," defined as "[a]s used in the terms 'bicycle equipped with a motor' and 'bicycles equipped with motors,' and for the purposes of those terms only, an electric motor not exceeding 750 watts."
- C. Deletes SECTION 3 of the bill and adds a new SECTION 3, which adds the following two new sections to Chapter 15, Article 18, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021 ("Operation of Bicycles and Play Vehicles"):
1. A new section related to the safe driving of bicycles equipped with motors on public streets, paths, or trails, which:
    - (a) Prohibits the operation of bicycles equipped with motors exceeding 750 watts from being operating on "any public street, highway, alley, path, or trail";
    - (b) Requires bicycles equipped with motors to be operated with the bicycle's wheels facing forward and in contact with the ground, and with the operator seated with one leg on each side of the seat, with exceptions for brief instances caused by road surface or other circumstances beyond the operator's control;

- (c) Prohibits an individual from operating a bicycle equipped with a motor in "an unsafe manner " or while engaging in exhibition driving on any public street, highway, alley, path, trail, or other public right-of-way, with exceptions for exhibition riding as part of a parade, tournament, or other activity permitted by the city; and
  - (d) Prohibits an individual from operating a bicycle equipped with a motor from:
    - (i) Standing or kneeling on any seat, riding on the bicycle's handlebars, or engaging in any other non-standard riding position;
    - (ii) Performing a maneuver where one or more wheels are intentionally lifted from the ground; and
    - (iii) Engaging in any other maneuver that endangers the operator or any other person.
- 2. A new section related to helmet requirement for minors operating bicycles and bicycles equipped with motors, which provides that no person under 18 years of age may operate a bicycle or a bicycle equipped with a motor unless that person is wearing a helmet that:
  - (a) Is specifically designed for that purpose;
  - (b) Is equipped with a chin strap; and
  - (c) Meets the helmet testing and design requirements of HRS § 291C-150(a).
- D. Deletes SECTIONS 4 through 6 of the bill, and renumbers subsequent SECTIONS.
- E. Makes miscellaneous technical and nonsubstantive amendments.



## A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE

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RELATING TO ELECTRIC BICYCLES.

BE IT ORDAINED by the People of the City and County of Honolulu:

**SECTION 1. Purpose.** The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate the possession and use of bicycles and electric bicycles ("e-bikes") in the City and County of Honolulu.

A study by the State of Hawai'i ("State") Department of Health covering the past three years (2022 to 2024), found that Emergency Medical Services ("EMS") attended to numerous injuries resulting from incidents involving e-bikes ("e-bike incidents") on O'ahu and that the number e-bike incidents has shown a concerning upward trend in Hawai'i. The average number of reported e-bike incidents statewide more than doubled from an average of 10 per month in 2022 to 24 per month in 2024, with O'ahu experiencing a nearly threefold increase, from an average of seven per month in 2022 to 19 per month in 2024. O'ahu accounted for 75 percent of the statewide e-bike incidents, with most of the injured patients (65 percent) being transported by the EMS for further medical attention. The typical individual involved in an e-bike incident on O'ahu is a younger male, with the average age of an EMS-treated patient at 32 years old. On O'ahu, there is a clustering of injuries in individuals between the ages of 12 and 20. About half of the injuries occurred between 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., and head injuries, including traumatic brain injuries, were notably prevalent among patients.

Helmet usage among e-bike riders steadily declined during the study period, from 51 percent in 2022 to 29 percent in 2024. Helmeted riders were older, on average, and experienced fewer traumatic brain injuries than unhelmeted riders (13 percent vs. 32 percent). Additionally, unhelmeted riders were more likely to require hospitalization, with head injuries being most common among this group. These findings highlight the critical role of helmet use in reducing the severity of head and brain injuries, and the need for intervention to promote helmet usage.

The financial impact of e-bike-related injuries is significant, with average medical costs reaching \$16,162 for emergency department visits and \$121,445 for hospitalizations. Hospitalized patients often required extended care, including discharge to skilled nursing or rehabilitation facilities. The rising incidence of injuries, declining helmet usage, and the substantial medical costs associated with e-bike incidents underscores the urgency of implementing regulations to enhance safety, including mandatory helmet use for younger riders and educational campaigns regarding e-bike safety practices.



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Although the State Legislature did not pass e-bike legislation in 2024, the City Council ("Council") considers it necessary to address this emergent issue with new safety requirements to protect e-bike operators and the public at large from e-bike incidents. However, the Council acknowledges that the State Legislature plans to amend the Statewide Traffic Code in 2025 to address the issue, which may supersede some of the requirements set forth in this ordinance.

SECTION 2. Section 15-2.33, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021, is amended to read as follows:

**"15-2.33 Bicycle and related terms.**

For the purposes of this chapter, the following [~~definition applies~~] definitions apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning.

***Bicycle.*** The same as defined in HRS § 291C-1.

***Bicycle Docking Station.*** A facility that is used for the parking, securing, dispensing, and return of bicycles, and is owned or operated, or both, by a bicycle sharing company.

***Bicycle Sharing Company.*** A company, subject to a contract or formal agreement with the city, which provides docked bicycles for use by the public.

***Motor.*** As used in the terms "bicycle equipped with a motor" and "bicycles equipped with motors," and for the purposes of those terms only, an electric motor not exceeding 750 watts."

SECTION 3. Chapter 15, Article 18, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021 ("Operation of Bicycles and Play Vehicles"), is amended by adding two new sections to be appropriately designated by the Revisor of Ordinances and to read as follows:

**"§ 15-18. Safe driving of bicycles equipped with motors on public streets, paths, or trails.**

- (a) Except as otherwise allowed by law, no bicycle equipped with a motor exceeding 750 watts may be operated on any public street, highway, alley, path, or trail.



**A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE**

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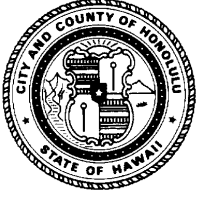
- (b) A bicycle equipped with a motor may be operated only with all of the bicycle's wheels facing forward and in contact with the ground at all times, and with the operator seated with one leg on each side of the seat; provided that it is not a violation of this subsection if a wheel of the bicycle loses contact with the ground briefly due to the condition of the road surface or other circumstances beyond the control of the operator.
  
- (c) It is unlawful for an individual to operate a bicycle equipped with a motor in an unsafe manner or engage in exhibition driving on any public street, highway, alley, path, trail, or other public right-of-way; provided that this subsection does not apply to an individual engaging in exhibition riding as part of a parade, tournament, or other activity permitted by the city.
  
- (d) An individual operating a bicycle equipped with a motor may not:
  - (1) Stand or kneel on any seat, ride on the bicycle's handlebars, or engage in any other non-standard riding position;
  
  - (2) Perform a maneuver where one or more wheels are intentionally lifted from the ground; or
  
  - (3) Engage in any other maneuver that endangers the operator or any other person.

**§ 15-18. Helmet requirement for minors operating bicycles and bicycles equipped with motors.**

No person under 18 years of age may operate a bicycle or a bicycle equipped with a motor unless that person is wearing a helmet that:

- (1) Is specifically designed for that purpose;
  
- (2) Is equipped with a chin strap; and
  
- (3) Meets the helmet testing and design requirements of HRS § 291C-150(a)."

SECTION 4. Ordinance material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New material is underscored. When revising, compiling, or printing this ordinance for inclusion in the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, the Revisor of Ordinances need not



**HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL**  
*KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU*  
 CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

ORDINANCE \_\_\_\_\_

BILL 52 (2024), CD1

**A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE**

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include the brackets, the material that has been bracketed and stricken, or the underscoring.

SECTION 5. This ordinance takes effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam

Augie Tulba

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DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

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August 29, 2024

Honolulu, Hawai'i

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Councilmembers

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Deputy Corporation Counsel

APPROVED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 RICK BLANGIARDI, Mayor  
 City and County of Honolulu

**Report Title:**

Electric Bicycles; Bicycles Equipped with Motors; Regulation; E-Bikes; Helmets; Traffic Code

**Description:**

Amends the City's Traffic Code to add safety regulations regarding the use of bicycles equipped with motors not exceeding 750 watts and to prohibit the operation of those bicycles on any public street, highway, alley, path, or trail.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*