

A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE

RELATING TO ELECTRIC BICYCLES.

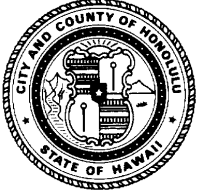
BE IT ORDAINED by the People of the City and County of Honolulu:

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," "bicycles equipped with motors," "motorized bicycle," and "bicycle with motor attached," and for the purposes of those terms only, an electric motor."

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, including a bikeway as defined by § 15-2.5.



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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 equipped with motors.

No person under 18 years of age may operate 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)."



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

ORDINANCE _____

BILL 52 (2024), CD1

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



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SECTION 5. This ordinance takes effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam

Augie Tulba

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

August 29, 2024
Honolulu, Hawai'i

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; Motorized Bicycles; Bicycles with Motor Attached; Regulation; E-Bikes; Helmets; Safe Driving; Traffic Code

Description:

Amends the City's Traffic Code to add safety regulations regarding the use of bicycles equipped with electric motors ("e-bikes") and to prohibit the operation of e-bikes with electric motors exceeding 750 watts on any public street, highway, alley, path, or trail, including bikeways.

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