



SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

March 29, 2022

Representative William M. Straus
Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 134
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Brendan Crighton
Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 520
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Straus, Chair Crighton, and members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned municipal officials and staff, write to you in support of H.3457/S.2309, *An Act relative to electric bicycles*, filed by Representatives Dylan Fernandes and Steve Owens and Senator Sal DiDomenico. This bill would provide a clear statutory definition of electric bicycles that is in line with dozens of other states. By updating these vehicle specifications and operational requirements, this would allow our cities and towns to regulate the use of electric bicycles as part of local active transportation plans and programs.

Electric bikes have many benefits that municipalities would like to encourage, including mode shift from automobiles, which reduces congestion and emissions. Electric bicycles also offer accessibility benefits for people with certain disabilities or the inability to cycle up hills. There is also the overall mobility improvement electric bikes provide for riders to travel longer distances and access more destinations.

The existing statutory definition of motorized bicycle is not in line with the electric bicycles growing in popularity today. Statute prohibits operation of motorized bicycles on shared use paths, and requires users to be at least 16 years old, possess a driver's license, and wear a helmet. Electric bikes are also subject to vehicle registration requirements.

While electric bikes are typically used similar to nonmotorized pedal bikes, statute current subjects electric bikes to more restrictive operating requirements. **This discrepancy causes regulatory challenges for municipalities looking to procure, permit, and actively promote use of electric bicycles on local roadways.** H.3457/S.2309 would establish the statutory clarity needed for communities to proactively plan for how we integrate electric bicycles into our broader transportation network. Importantly, by creating three classes of electric bicycles, this bill also makes a necessary distinction between lower speed pedal assist electric bicycles and higher speed vehicles, which require slightly different operating regulations. This change would align Massachusetts laws more closely with federal standards as well as 42 other states & the District of Columbia.

We support legislative efforts to update definitions for e-bikes and delegate regulatory authority to municipalities and the Commonwealth over the shared and personal use of these vehicles. A state level approach will ensure consistency across municipal boundaries and strengthen opportunities to promote regional cycling connectivity.



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We strongly encourage the Joint Committee on Transportation to report this bill out favorably. Thank you for your consideration of these comments, and please do not hesitate to reach out to Eric Bourassa, Transportation Director (ebourassa@mapc.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Adam Chapdelaine
Town Manager, Town of Arlington

Sarah Stanton
Town Manager, Town of Bedford

Jascha Franklin-Hodge
Chief of Streets, City of Boston

Joseph Barr
Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation, City of Cambridge

Tom Ambrosino
City Manager, City of Chelsea

Jay Monty
Transportation Planner, City of Everett

Susan Barrett
Transportation Manager, Town of Lexington

Jim Malloy
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Mayor, City of Medford

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