

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6862

AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRIC SCOOTERS, ELECTRIC BICYCLES AND

Title: MOTOR-DRIVEN CYCLES.

Vote Date: 3/19/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/10/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill makes changes related to e-bike sales and modification. This requires anyone who modifies an electrical bike, changing its speed capability or motor engagement, to modify the required label accordingly. It prohibits sellers from representing vehicles as electric bikes if they don't meet the state's definition, and to have bikes with multiple operating modes or are designed to be modified by a switch or a map to no longer meet that definition. It makes the violation of several existing laws now infractions. This bill aims to strike a balance between allowing law enforcement to be proactive with modifications made to electric bikes and tamp down behavior when riders are posing a danger to themselves and others while promoting the use of electric bicycles for recreational purposes and providing an accessible means of transport.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language modified the definition of motor-driven cycle to include unicycles and increased the wattage for a motor-driven cycle, set a five-brake horse-power limit, and allowed the use of Class 1 electric bikes on trails. This language intends to clarify the distinction between what can be classified as a motor-driven cycle used for recreational purposes and at what point do modifications to the cycle upgrade it to motor vehicle status.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

No state agency provided testimony on this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association supports the bill, notes that the chiefs have seen e-bikes become an issue, particularly bikes being sold and configured as e-bikes while being able to exceed the 28 MPH speed limit. There are no regulations as to who can ride these bikes and if they are considered legal vehicles, which limits law enforcement's options in dealing with them when encountered. They feel the bill adequately defines bikes that exceed the Class 3 e-bikes qualifications as motorcycles and that would be treated as a motorcycle and requirements of a motorcycle operators must be met with this vehicle as well, such as licensing, headlights, insurance, registration, etc.

Bruce Donald, Southern New England Manager, East Coast Greenway Alliance

Mr. Donald supports the bill, updating e-bicycle regulations is overdue. Supports identification labels for top tubes of e-bikes, as it helps monitor trail usages and provides east categorization for enforcement officials. Prohibiting the alteration of an e-bike to go fast punishable with fines will help make communities safer. He supports the requirement of wearing protective headgear, believing it will save lives yearly. He highlights the root issue of the complications of the status of altered vehicles that go above the allow speed limit and acknowledges the constraints of working with the class system of e-bikes.

Tiannis Coffie, Policy and Partnerships Specialist, Veo

Ms. Coffie supports the bill, noting the current 75-pound limit is restrictive of the types of models they can create that are more durable and accessible and the increasing limit of 100 pounds is very helpful to promote durable, safe, and sustainable models to help those who don't have sufficient access to public transit options. She notes that these newer and more heavy models have better braking systems, improved lighting, and better stability, along with longer lifespans, which limits waste and environmental footprints.

Sandra Fry, Chair, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Board

Ms. Fry supports the bill, noting that this bill helps make much more clarification and recommendations regarding electric bikes in the state. Did provide a change to allow the wattage of a motor-driven cycle to be increased to 4,000 watts, which, as she notes, is the equivalent of a 50cc gasoline engine. She says doing this will allow mopeds to fall not this category but keep electric dirt bikes (wattage of over 20,000) out.

Rachel Fussell, Senior Manager of Recreation Policy, PeopleForBikes Coalition

Ms. Fussell supports the bill, noting that there are several manufacturers that are knowingly selling motor vehicles disguised as electric bicycles by using the vehicle's motor controller to an external app from the manufacturer. She emphasizes that this behavior poses several safety and enforcement issues for public streets and off-road trails. She proposed two amendments to the bill, the first being the allow the use of Class 1 electric bicycles on the trails of CT. She further notes that these bikes look and ride like traditional bicycle and assist individuals while riding. She also identifies research that suggests the use of Class 1 electric

bicycles on trails do not significantly alter "the public enjoyment or affect the patterns of use on those trails." Also suggests a new definition that would provide a provision for unicycles, which she notes is a growing e-mobility bike type.

Francis Pickering, Executive Director, Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Mr. Pickering provided comments on the bill. He notes that the bill would provide greater direction for law enforcement to address violations, noting similar safety concerns as electric dirt bikes or e-motors, which are already under current statutory definitions, but are not regulated the same way as gasoline-powered vehicles. He further notes the definition to consider output in kilowatts but believes the limit of 1,500 watts would disadvantage moped riders and place more strict requirements on electric mopeds rather than gasoline ones, which is not consistent with goals related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable transit options. He believes the maximum kilowatt limit should be 4,000 watts (or 4 kilowatts), which is similar to that of the European Union, and notes that there should be concerns that electric bikes go faster than this.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Matthew Schell, Engineer/Owner, Spark Cycleworks

Mr. Schell opposes the bill, noting the importance of e-bike riders providing an alternative to high automobile costs, highlighting the benefits that e-bikes have given his customers. E-bike riders are generally responsible and are just looking for an alternative to a car, some of which having disabilities, giving them independence. He emphasizes that computer systems are programmed by manufacturers and phone apps that draw concern from legislators are not Connecticut electric bicycle, rather electric dirt bikes. He is concerned about the monitoring of the rules in the legislation and how law enforcement will address users. He brings up mopeds being targeted next and notes the 1,500-watt mark is not enough for the state of CT and wants the speed and power to be line with modern standards and believes that companies like Temu and Amazon will still direct import bikes to customers and will not follow the rules in the legislation. He further believes there is a more streamlined system that can be implemented that can consist of (1) micro-class of vehicles (all e-bike classes plus scooters and low-powered sit scooters), (2) light vehicles (1 Horsepower-5 horsepower with Dot-approved features), (3) motorcycles, and (4) off-road vehicles (750 watts and over) do not have DOT approved features).

Alex Titarenko, Creator, YouTube Channel *Maximum Charge EV*

Mr. Titarenko is opposed to the bill and cites several reasons for doing so. First, he notes the crumbling bike lane infrastructure on CT's roads and suggests that a 1,500-watt motor is not sufficient for traveling up hills, especially considering that many riders may have physical limitations that do not allow them to pedal forcefully. Second, he points to the use of electric bicycles and motor-driven cycles for food delivery jobs and for commuting purposes, and that this bill would lower their seeded and make it harder for these riders to complete their work effectively. Third, he appeals to rider nature and suggests that most rider can adhere to speed limits on road and reduce their speed similar to that of traditional bikes when on trails and emphasizes the convenience of electric bikes for reducing traffic congestion and

promoting a cleaner environment. Fourth, he notes that the cost of specialized equipment to test the power levels of electric bikes will be expensive and also pose safety hazards for riders and law enforcement. He proposes a solution, which is to enforce speed limits on trails and roads, which will help to keep reckless riders off the street and avoid, as he says, "punish responsible drivers who stay within speed limits."

James Barry

Mr. Barry opposes the bill, citing concerns about limiting the speeds, as he describes himself as a responsible rider and lowering the speed would make the roads more dangerous for him if he is slower than the flow of traffic.

Carol Bourque

Ms. Bourque is opposed to the bill; she believes the bill will prohibit use of electric bikes on trails which she says is discriminatory against seniors who use electric bikes for assistance. She further states that there should be speed limits for all bicycles and that non-electric bike riders sometimes go faster than electric bikes.

Ryan Chase

Mr. Chase opposes the bill, emphasizing the personal benefits and enrichment electric bikes bring to him and his partner, and how they are very useful for helping those with physical limitations get around and enjoy the state. He believes that the core issue is a lack of enforcements of current regulations and safety standards and does not believe this new bill will curb safety and sees it as an outright ban. He provides that this mode of transportation is effective at reducing traffic congestion and lowering carbon emissions and banning them from use on trails will force them to be on more dangerous roadways, and this bill severely undermines their benefits.

Patrick and Denise Chelstowski

Mr. and Mrs. Chelstowski oppose the bill, drawing from their experience as seniors who are responsible users of electric bikes. They have continuous knee pain and how their Class 2 electric bikes were a huge reliever for them. They have used these electric bikes to enjoy their time with their family and enjoy going on trails throughout CT and in neighboring states when on vacation. They feel this bill will restrict their ability to enjoy these bikes, and they do not understand why there is a voucher program to promote the purchase of Class 1 and 2 electric bikes in Connecticut but also a bill such as this which, as they say, would be counterproductive to the program. There was also confusion from the provision that banned these two classes of bike unless it was permitted by local ordinance considering that the Airline Trail is maintained by the state department of environmental protection.

Johana Collazo

Ms. Collazo is opposed to the bill, drawing from her experience as someone with anxiety who uses an electric bike to help with her anxiety by immersing herself in nature. She says she is a responsible rider who follows the rules and does not want there to be restrictions on access, especially for seniors who require the extra help from their electric bikes.

John and Lisa Dennison

Mr. and Mrs. Dennison oppose the bill, drawing from their experience as an elderly person himself who suffer from various mental health issues and health problems who rely electric bike to get around on bike rides and who derive great benefit from their use. He notes that it is dangerous for bikers to ride alongside cars who cause a lot of traffic and suggests banning bikes by weight or motor output instead.

Stephen Doherty

Mr. Doherty opposes the bill, noting that seniors and people with disabilities rely on their electric bikes to get around and speed limits would be a better alternative.

Joseph Evagash

Mr. Evagash opposes the bill, noting his experience with him and his son using electric bikes responsibly and how their use is good for the environment. While he acknowledges some reckless activity happens on electric bikes their focus should be implementing speed limits, noting that motor vehicles are required to obey traffic laws. Wants the committee to be cautious when considering restrictions on electric bike usage.

Philip Finkle

Mr. Finkle opposes the bill, noting that he has used an electric bike for his mental and physical health as an elderly person. He says that electric bikes are less damaging to trails than regular bikes and that both regular and electric bikes of lower classes go about the same speed down hills. He says the restriction of usage on trails and natural surfaces would disproportionately affect older adults. He also notes that requiring a helmet for electric bike riders is inconsistent with the fact that motorcyclists aren't required to wear a helmet and prefer the helmet requirement be limited to minors.

Todd Sessel-Glassberg

Mr. Sessel-Glassburg oppose this bill coming from the perspective as an avid electric bicyclist. Believes the solution would be to implement speed limits of 20 mph on a trail for electric bikes. Believes that there should be law for regular bicycles on trails as well, noting that regular bicycles on trails go over 20 mph.

Ethan Guida

Mr. Guida opposes the bill, citing broad opposition.

Robert Gursky

Mr. Gursky opposes the bill, citing multiple oppositions. First, he opposes the prohibition of class 3 electric bicycles on all path, since some paths, including the Putnam Bridge, are used for commuting purposes, and suggests a speed limit as a more appropriate solution. Second, he opposes class 1 and 2 bicycles on natural surface path, noting that electric bicycles

provide a recreational outlet and suggests a speed limit in these areas. Third, he opposes the helmet mandate for all riders, noting that while he promotes the encouragement of wearing helmets, he believes the state should continue being a helmet-choice state. Lastly, he opposes special rules and privileges for public safety staff to ride class 3 bikes on a path and believes that no one person should be give advantages over another.

Stephen Halpern

Mr. Halpern opposes the bill, citing that electric bikes do not disturb or harm the environment and should not be banned because they help seniors such as himself enjoy the beauty the trails provide in an accessible manner.

Randy Howes

Mr. Howes is opposed to the bill as an electric bike rider and an avid outdoor enthusiast who uses an electric bike to help with his arthritis and several health conditions while at the same time getting off the dangerous roads. He suggests that bans aren't needed but rather proper enforcement that is similar for motor vehicle drivers. Notes that many people enjoy the trails and the rules for electric bike usage should be within the rules for other forms of transportation.

David Hyman

Mr. Hyman opposes the bill as an avid electric bike rider on CT trails. He is a senior who cannot handle a regular bike and relies on an electric bike and says that he has not seen any problem on the trails that was caused by an electric bike.

JP Hynes

Opposes the electric bike ban.

Rob Jackson

Mr. Jackson opposes the bill, saying that electric bikes help for exercise and are not the same of motorcycles, and therefore shouldn't be banned.

Devon Johnson

Mr. Johnson opposes the bill, saying that electric bikes help older folks such as himself get around and enjoy the outdoors, and suggest that the most reckless bikes and riders of traditional bikes. He suggests that speed limits and pedal assists would be the best approach to resolve reckless behavior.

Jeffrey Joy

Opposes the access restrictions.

Valeria Kara

Ms. Kara opposes the bill, believing that it is better to regulate trail access by speed, not by whether or not you have an electric bike. She notes that seniors are reliant on these bikes, and they help people get outdoors and enrich themselves and further states that these bikes allow her to ride with her husband who uses an electric bike.

Juris Labrencis

Mr. Labrencis opposes the bill, drawing from his experience as an elderly bike rider who rides responsibly and acknowledges that some people are not responsible but still opposes the bill.

Brendan Lynch

Mr. Lynch opposes the bill, saying that there needs to be regulation for electric bike usage on certain trails, not non altogether.

Paul Marks

Mr. Marks opposes the bill, noting that electric bikes can help people enjoy the outdoors, and while he acknowledges that there is a need for restriction, limiting usage in this manner will be difficult to enforce. Proposes posting speed limits with a max weight limit for wheeled vehicles.

Thomas Massicott

Mr. Massicott opposes the bill, noting that electric bicycles are no different than regular bicycles and that they allow physically challenged people to utilize trails that they wouldn't be able to enjoy otherwise.

Marcin Mazurek

Mr. Mazurek opposes the bill, drawing from his experience as a cyclist and pedestrian in CYT and a witness to make close calls due to reckless driving in motor vehicles, and discusses a personal experience that left him with a scar on his right hand. He notes the natural beauty of the state to travel and the convenience of electric bikes for older and disabled commuters to do so. Removing access to trails will not improve road safety and will ultimately make people less safe for those trying to live a less car dependent and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Casey Moran

Mr. Moran opposes the bill, citing the fact that electric bikes that expanded access for many to the recreational lands of the state and notes there are no issues with electric bike users posing a safety hazard. He notes that the more people that utilize this mode of transportation the more that the roads become safe with people not driving cars. Promoting non-motorized travel in the state becomes harder with bans such as these.

Michael Nass

Mr. Nass opposes the bill, noting that he and his friends with mobility issues use these bikes to get around the trails of CT stresses the significant of these bikes for those with many health conditions and believes a speed limit would be a better alternative.

John Nicksich

Mr. Nicksich opposes the bill, drawing from his experience as an elderly man with a class 2 bike who uses it on trails. He notes that regular bike rider exceeds the maximum speed limit his bike goes and says he prefer not to be subjected to the congestion and dangerous roads, which poses major safety risks.

Brian Ottaviano

Mr. Ottaviano opposes the bill, noting that the actions of a few reckless electric bike riders are the cause of this bill and that they should not ruin the enjoyment of these bikes for the majority of riders who are responsible. He anecdotes about his use of a Class 2 electric bike to help him get around and travel further distances that he thought was possible given his old age. He also notes not witnessing any problems caused by electric bikes riders during his years of walking and riding the trails.

Victor P

Mr. P opposes the bill, noting his personal experience as an electric bike rider who follows the rules and is responsible. Believes a speed limit on trails should be implemented instead.

Ryan Papineau

Mr. Papineau opposes the bill, noting his personal experience of being dependent on an electric bike since he sustained a back injury after a rear-ending situation, as it has allowed him to be more active in the outdoors. He notes the benefit of electric bikes on local economies, noting small businesses near that have benefitted from out-of-state cyclists. Believes that further restrictions on electric bike use will limit access to local economies and amenities that many people enjoy today,

Nancy Phillips

Ms. Phillips opposes the bill, noting that speed limits on trails should be investigated instead. She also notes the benefits electric bikes for seniors and those with disabilities and suggests a band on electric bikes should violate ADA regulations.

Oscar Polar Huaman

Mr. Huaman is opposed to the bill, noting that he uses of an electric bike is helpful as a mode of transportation and as a form of exercise. Does not believe there should be a ban or further regulation on electric bikes.

Patricia Reinhardt

Ms. Reinhardt opposes the bill, noting that there should be an allowance of Class 1 electric bikes on trails, as this would benefit people who have health conditions and suggests that these electric bikes are similar to that of regular bikes, are silent and have no throttle. She also notes that allowing these bikes on trails will make rider safer as they won't have to travel on busy and dangerous roads.

Justin Reynolds

Mr. Reynolds opposes the bill, noting that age restriction would be a better alternative and believes that those under 18 are the source of problematic usage of these bikes.

Yawasaph Robinson

Mr. Robinson opposes the bill, noting his personal experience using an electric bike to go off road and believes regulations will hinder people from enjoying the experience.

Tyler Rubin

Mr. Rubin opposes the bill, noting that these changes won't benefit the entire population and believes the output limit of 1,500 watts classifies these bicycles as motorcycles, making a large portion of current bikes illegal for use since registration would not be possible. He believes the limit should be increased to 4,500 watts so that the bikes can keep up with highway traffic.

Chris Russell

Mr. Russell opposes the bill, noting section 3, parts c and d. He believes that a majority of electric bike users are older individuals who use them for travel on trails and says that banning them punishes people who seek to enjoy these amenities, especially the Farmington Canal and Airline Trails which he regularly rides on. He suggests that electric bikes don't cause damage to the trail system and that the restriction will force people onto dangerous roads which may lead to more bike/car accidents.

Tricia Schiavi

Ms. Schiavi opposes the bill, noting his personal experience as an electric bikes owner who uses it for exercise on the trails and who avoids the roads while riding. She believes electric bike owners are responsible and has been passed by regular bikes.

Cynthia Sebetes

Ms. Sebetes opposes the bill as an electric bike user who is permanently disabled and who cannot go up hills without pedal assist. She relies on the bikes for physical therapy and believes that creating speed limits would be a better solution.

Carl Smith

Mr. Smith opposes the bill, noting the popularity of electric bikes as a money saver for commuting to work with no costs for insurance, registration fees, and gas, and notes their popularity among seniors for getting outdoors and exercising.

Frank Snape

Mr. Snape opposes the bill as an older individual who uses an electric bike to explore the trails and go farther than he could've before. He notes that the fastest and rudest bikers are the "professionals" and does not want the freedom to explore the trails to be taken away.

Tarek Tabbara

Mr. Tabbara opposes the bill, noting that it unfairly restricts access to trails and disadvantages older adults and those with disabilities who rely on the bikes. He believes CT should focus on striking a balance between trail preservation with accessibility, education, and enforcement against reckless riding. He further notes the benefit of electric bikes as gateways to the outdoor, sustainable travel practices and a local economy contributor.

Christine Tappe

Ms. Tappe opposes the bill, especially the ab on class 1 and 3 electric bikes on trails and natural surfaces. Says she regular travels on Airline Trail State Park and this restriction will negatively impact her mental and physical health as well as that of her friend who ride with her.

Jack Vaughn

Mr. Vaughn opposes the bill. While he agrees with banning Class 3 electric bikes for kids underage, he doesn't believe this should apply to adult riders, calling these Class 1 and 2 bikes similar to regular bikes. He believes banning them hurts the quality of life for residents who enjoy these activities while getting exercise and enjoying the amenities of CT, and notes that these bikes carry a necessity for commuting for some.

Katelin Walsh

Ms. Walsh opposes the bill, who relies on these bikes for exercise as she has a health condition that makes traditional exercise more difficult. She also has derived benefit from the use of these bikes for her and her husband to connect and explore places together. She notes that these bikes are sustainable and accessible for people to remain independent and active and that the impact bans such as the ones proposed in the bill will have on people like her.

Clarke White

Mr. White opposes the bill and believes this bill doesn't address reality and safety for riders and pedestrians.

Elizabeth Whittum

Ms. Whittum opposes the bill, noting the numerous benefits that electric bikes have, such as providing a great way to get around and go to work while getting exercise and limit traffic congestion on roads. The focus, she says, should be focused on speed limits and following the rules of the road, pointing to her her experience as a rider who regularly gets passed by regular bike riders who are only focused on speed.

5 anonymous individuals also submitted testimony in opposition to the bill.

Reported by: Patrick Riley

Date: 3/21/2025