

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Ash Kalra, Chair  
AB 1557 (Papan) – As Amended April 16, 2026

**SUBJECT:** VEHICLES: ELECTRIC BICYCLES

**KEY ISSUES:**

- 1) SHOULD VARIOUS ELECTRIC BICYCLES BE SUBJECT TO SPEED AND WATTAGE LIMITATIONS?
- 2) SHOULD THE SALE OF A BIKE VIOLATING SPECIFIED SPEED AND WATTAGE RESTRICTIONS SUBJECT THE MANUFACTURER OR SELLER TO CIVIL PENALTIES?

**SYNOPSIS**

*Electric bikes are a highly popular means of transportation for people looking to move away from automobiles without requiring the person to expend significant energy to go from point A to point B. These bikes function by using an electric motor to assist the rider to power the bike, or in some cases, power the bike wholly through battery power. As popular as these bikes have become, and how beneficial the deployment of electric bikes can be for the environment, the speeds these bikes can reach make them a potential threat to public health and safety. Not only do the speeds reached by electric bikes make them more susceptible to accidents, the speed also exacerbates the severity of injuries caused by e-bike crashes when compared to their wholly pedal powered counterparts.*

*Aiming to address the risks of electric bicycles, this bill makes several modest and common-sense reforms to the law. First, the bill prohibits the sale of any e-bike capable of generating more than 750 watts of continuous power unless the bike is a cargo e-bike, as defined. Next the bill prohibits a child under the age of 16 from riding an e-bike capable of producing more than 250 watts of continuous power. Finally, the bill prohibits the manufacturing or sales of class 1 or 2 e-bikes capable of an assisted speed in excess of 16 miles per hour or generating 250 watts of power. The bill would make the manufacturing and sale provisions subject to civil penalties for violations.*

*The author-sponsored measure is supported by a coalition of medical professionals, local governments, and law enforcement agencies. The proponents of the bill contend that for all of their benefits, e-bikes must be used safely to avoid injuries to the rider and bystanders. The bill is opposed by e-bike manufacturers and bike advocates. The opposition contends the primary safety risk is not from e-bikes, but from unregulated motorized bicycles and similar vehicles. This bill will be heard in the Assembly Committee on Transportation one day prior to this hearing.*

**SUMMARY:** Revises and recasts the definition of a Class 1 electric bike and prohibits a manufacturer from equipping any device labeled as an electric bike with a motor capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits a person under the age of 16 from operating a bicycle motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power.
- 2) Authorizes a law enforcement officer to remove a vehicle operated by a person violating 1) from the territorial limit in which the officer is authorized to act.
- 3) Prohibits a manufacturer from equipping any device labeled as an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power.
- 4) Prohibits a manufacturer from equipping any device labeled as a class 1 or 2 electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of peak power or providing assistance capable of exceeding a speed of 16 miles per hour.
- 5) Provides that a retailer cannot sell or offer or advertise for sale a bike violating the provisions of 4).
- 6) Authorizes the imposition of a civil penalty not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) for a first violation, and not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for each subsequent violation of the provisions of 4) and 5).
- 7) Permits the Attorney General, a city attorney, a county counsel, or a district attorney to seek recovery of the civil penalties in 6).
- 8) Provides that a prevailing plaintiff in an action brought pursuant to 6) to recover reasonable attorney's fees and costs.
- 9) Provides that a cargo electric bike, as defined, may be equipped with a motor capable of producing more than 750 watts of continuous power.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Defines an e-bike as a bicycle equipped with fully operational pedals and an electric motor that is not physically capable of exceeding 750 watts of power. (Vehicle Code Section 312.5 (a).)
- 2) Defines a class 1 e-bike as a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour, and is not capable of providing assistance to reach speeds greater than 20 miles per hour. (Vehicle Code Section 312.5 (a)(1).)
- 3) Defines a class 2 e-bike as a bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle, and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour. (Vehicle Code Section 312.5 (a)(2).)
- 4) Defines a class 3 electric bicycle as a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour, and equipping with a speedometer. (Vehicle Code Section 312.5 (a)(3).)

- 5) Prohibits a person from tampering with or modifying an electric bicycle as to change the speed capability of the bicycle unless the modification keeps within the existing speed allowances of an electric bicycle. (Vehicle Code Section 24016 (d).)
- 6) Prohibits a person from selling a product, device or application that can modify the speed capability of an electric bicycle such that it no longer meets the definition of an electric bicycle. (Vehicle Code Section 24016 (e).)
- 7) Authorizes a peace officer to impound a vehicle that does not meet the definition of an electric bicycle and is both powered by an electric motor capable of exclusively propelling the vehicle in excess of 20 miles per hour on a highway and is being operated without a license to operate that vehicle, or a person operating a vehicle that is a class 2 electric bicycle and is not 16 years of age. (Vehicle Code Section 22651.082.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** As currently in print this bill is keyed fiscal.

**COMMENTS:** As California seeks to develop more infill housing and boost public transit use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the state remains plagued by the so called “first mile, last mile” problem. This issue essentially boils down to the fact that while most Californians live close to some transit, getting to the transit stop from a person’s home or business can require them to walk a mile. Understandably, many Californians do not want to exert that much effort, especially when dressed for work. Although traditional pedal powered bicycles help close this gap, the proliferation of electronically assisted bikes, or e-bikes, makes using a bike to get to transit a far more appealing option. However, electronic bicycles are capable of reaching and maintaining speeds only attainable by the world’s most elite cyclists for short periods of time. When used irresponsibly and in areas saturated with pedestrians, these bikes can pose significant safety hazards. This measure seeks to reduce the dangers of e-bikes by limiting the power production and speeds of certain classes of e-bikes. In support of the bill the author states:

AB 1557 closes a loophole in existing law that allows manufacturers to sell high-powered devices, and lowers power and speed limits for class 1 and class 2 e-bikes.

California has seen a dramatic rise in e-bike-related accidents resulting in severe trauma as a result of the speed and power of the device. The current 750 watt power restriction in code fails to distinguish whether the law refers to “peak” or “continuous” power. Certain manufacturers have taken advantage of this ambiguity by selling devices that have peak power thresholds far higher than 750 watts, putting riders, drivers, and pedestrians in danger.

AB 1557 closes the loophole by clarifying the 750-watt limit as a peak power limit while aligning ourselves with Europe and establishing a new 250-watt continuous power limit for class 1 and class 2 e-bikes and capping their top assisted speed at 16 miles per hour. These changes ensure e-bikes are properly classified while improving safety for riders, drivers, and pedestrians.

***When used safely, electronic bicycles are a useful tool in meeting California’s climate goals.***

According to the federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics within United States Department of Energy, in 2021, half of all “trips” taken by Americans were three miles or less.

(<https://www.energy.gov/cmei/vehicles/articles/fotw-1230-march-21-2022-more-half-all-daily-trips-were-less-three-miles-2021>.) Although these trips may be too far for many people to consider walking, taking these trips in gas-powered vehicles significantly contributes to

greenhouse gas emissions. The Federal Highway Administration notes that the number of these trips using cars could be reduced significantly if people had improved access to transit. While many Americans live within a relatively reasonable distance to transit, according to the Federal Highway Administration, having to walk more than a mile significantly lessens a person's willingness to use transit. ([https://highways.dot.gov/safety/pedestrian-bicyclist/safety-tools/pg-17-33-improving-safety-pedestrians-and-bicyclists.](https://highways.dot.gov/safety/pedestrian-bicyclist/safety-tools/pg-17-33-improving-safety-pedestrians-and-bicyclists))

One means by which to encourage Americans to move away from car trips and onto transit or other more climate friendly modes of transportation is the deployment of electronic bicycles. Thankfully, many Americans are embracing electronic bicycles. A report by the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy notes that as of 2023 the global market for electronic bikes grew to \$40 billion. (*Why We Need E-Bikes As A Climate and Mobility Solution*, Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (Mar. 12, 2024) available at: [https://itdp.org/2024/03/12/why-we-need-e-bikes-as-a-climate-and-mobility-solution/.](https://itdp.org/2024/03/12/why-we-need-e-bikes-as-a-climate-and-mobility-solution/)) The same report noted that consumers in the United States and Canada drove most of the industry's rapid growth. (*Ibid.*) While much of the appetite for electronic bicycles in the North American market may be driven by the fact that much of the rest of the world embraced traditional cycling as a means of transportation years earlier, it is still an encouraging sign.

***When used in an irresponsible manner, electric bicycles pose a significant safety risk.*** As beneficial to the future of clean transportation as electronic bicycles may be, they do pose safety hazards. While most human powered bicycles can reach speeds between five and 15 miles per hour, depending on the bike's characteristics and the athleticism of the rider, electric bikes can easily reach speeds between 20 and 30 miles an hour. (John Maa, MD, et al., *Electric Bikes Are Emerging as Public Health Hazard*, The American College of Surgeons (July 17, 2024) available at: [https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2024/julyaugust-2024-volume-109-issue-7/electric-bikes-are-emerging-as-public-health-hazard/.](https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2024/julyaugust-2024-volume-109-issue-7/electric-bikes-are-emerging-as-public-health-hazard/)) At these higher speeds, avoiding obstacles becomes significantly more difficult. According to the American College of Surgeons, serious crashes involving electric bikes are quickly approaching the same levels as regular bicycles, despite the fact that regular bikes still vastly outnumber e-bikes. (*Ibid.*) The same study noted that in San Diego, the most common tickets issued to regular cyclists were for illegal turns whereas speeding tickets make up the most prominent citation to e-bike riders. (*Ibid.*)

These risks can be compounded by riding an electric bike in an irresponsible manner. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons note that the benefits to musculoskeletal health derived from traditional cycling far outweigh the risks of a crash. However, they note that given the high speeds e-bikes can achieve, and the lack of corresponding health benefits, make the bikes particularly dangerous. ([https://www.aaos.org/aaos-home/newsroom/press-releases/the-hidden-dangers-of-e-bikes-orthopaedic-surgeons-warn-of-rising-injury-risks-for-riders-of-all-ages/.](https://www.aaos.org/aaos-home/newsroom/press-releases/the-hidden-dangers-of-e-bikes-orthopaedic-surgeons-warn-of-rising-injury-risks-for-riders-of-all-ages/)) Unfortunately, just last month, a traditional cyclist was killed in Davis, California after they were hit by a juvenile riding an e-bike. (Peyton Headlee, *Bicyclist killed in collision with e-bike rider on Davis bike path was Sutter Health employee*, KCRA News (Mar. 3, 2026) available at: <https://www.kcra.com/article/bicyclist-dies-after-collision-on-davis-bike-path-near-high-school/70580634.>)

***This bill*** aims to limit the sales of the most high-powered e-bikes capable of causing the most harmful injuries. First the bill limits class 1 and 2 e-bikes to those bikes capable of producing 250 watts of less of continuous power or that is incapable and providing assistance to reach

speeds greater than 16 miles per hour. The bill also prohibits any e-bike from exceeding 750 watts of power unless the bike is a cargo electric bicycle, as defined. The bill would provide civil penalties ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000 if a bike is advertised or sold as a class 1 or 2 e-bike that can exceed these limits. Finally, the bill also limits persons under 16 from riding an e-bike capable of producing more than 250 watts of continuous power and authorizes law enforcement to seize a bike violating that provision.

***ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:*** This bill is supported by a wide range of local governments, medical professionals, and law enforcement. In support of the bill, the California Police Chiefs Association writes:

AB 1557 takes a targeted and common-sense approach to addressing this problem. By clarifying that the existing 750-watt limit applies to maximum peak motor output, the bill closes the loophole that has allowed overly powerful devices to be marketed as compliant e-bikes. This ensures that manufacturers adhere to the intent of the law and prevents the continued spread of high-powered devices operating in bicycle lanes, paths, and other areas not designed for higher-speed travel.

In addition, AB 1557 lowers continuous motor power limits and reduces speed thresholds for Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes. These changes better align California's standards with internationally recognized safety frameworks and help ensure that e-bikes remain within a performance range appropriate for shared-use environments. By establishing clearer and more consistent parameters, the bill helps distinguish between true e-bikes and higher-powered electric vehicles that should be subject to more stringent regulatory requirements.

From a law enforcement perspective, AB 1557 provides much-needed clarity and improves the ability of officers to identify non-compliant devices in the field. Clear, objective standards are critical for consistent enforcement and public understanding. This is particularly important in school zones, parks, and dense urban areas, where officers are increasingly responding to complaints and incidents involving unsafe e-bike operation.

***ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:*** This bill is opposed by several e-bike manufacturers and bicycle advocates. In opposition to the bill, Trek Bicycles writes:

AB 1557 as drafted will radically change the definition of eBikes in California in direct violation of Federal Law. We acknowledge that California has a growing and unregulated problem with more powerful eMotos that are being falsely and illegally sold as low speed eBikes. Senator Catherine Blakespear directly addresses this problem in SB 1167 – which we support.

According to the legislative report by the Mineta Transportation Institute, nearly 90% of the vehicles used by youth in California are not electric bicycles but are in fact e-motos: either electric motorcycles or electric dirt bikes.

Trek Bicycle Corporation owns and operates a distribution center in Ontario California. We have 30 directly owned retail locations throughout the state and we distribute our eBikes through dozens of small Independent Bicycle Dealers, AB 1557 will unfairly penalize each of these California businesses.

California has led the nation in eBike legislation, passing our first comprehensive 3 class eBike law many years ago. The rest of the country – including the Federal Government -- have followed California's lead. Now, California has the opportunity to lead again, not by moving unnecessarily backward and contrary to Federal law with AB 1557, but by addressing the real problem –eMotos – head on with SB 1167.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

AAA Northern California, Nevada & Utah  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California  
American College of Surgeons: Southern and San Diego Chapters  
Automobile Club of Southern California  
Brea; City of  
California Emergency Nurses Association  
California Medical Association  
California Orthopedic Association  
California Police Chiefs Association  
City of Carlsbad  
City of Foster City  
City of Irvine  
City of Moreno Valley  
City of Mountain View  
City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County  
Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments  
South Bay Cities Council of Governments  
Town of Hillsborough

### **Opposition**

Area 13 (unless amended)  
Atv Wholesale Outlet INC.  
Bicycle Discovery Pacific Beach  
Bike Walk Alameda  
Bird Rock  
Brompton Bicycle Incorporated  
Bullet Bike Corporation  
California Bicycle Coalition (unless amended)  
Ebikeaccess.org  
Electric Ridez LLC  
Helen's Cycles  
Last Mile San Francisco, Marin, NYC  
Lauf Cycles  
Neutron Holdings, INC. Dba Lime  
New Pedego Holdings INC. D/b/a Pedego Electric Bikes  
North Rim Adventure Sports, INC.  
Pacific Cycle, INC  
Peopleforbikes

Practical Cycle LLC  
Santa Monica Forward  
Streets are for Everyone (unless amended)  
Streets for All (unless amended)  
The New Wheel  
Trek Bicycle Corporation  
Yeti Cycles, LLC

**Analysis Prepared by:** Nicholas Liedtke / JUD. / (916) 319-2334