

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
AB 1942 (Bauer-Kahan) – As Introduced February 13, 2026

Policy Committee: Transportation

Vote: 12 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the registration of electric bicycles (e-bikes) with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), subject to registration fees, and requires such e-bikes to display license plates. The bill subjects a person operating an e-bike in violation of the bill's requirements to fines of \$100 to \$250.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires every class 2 and class 3 e-bike be registered with the DMV and display a specialized license plate issued by DMV.
- 2) Directs DMV to adopt regulations to implement the bill's requirements, including regulations regarding application and (a) issuance of registration and special license plates; (b) plate size, placement and visibility requirements; (c) registration fees in an amount not to exceed the reasonable regulatory cost of issuing or renewing registration; and (d) proof of ownership requirements, including the provision of a serial number for the registered e-bike.
- 3) Declares a person operating a class 2 or class 3 e-bike in violation of the bill's requirements guilty of an infraction and subjects such a person to a fine not to exceed \$100 for the first offense, \$200 for a second offense and \$250 for each subsequent offense.
- 4) Creates the Electric Bicycle Registration Fund (E-bike Reg Fund) and directs all monies received by the DMV pursuant to this bill to the fund, to be used, upon appropriation, to cover the DMV's costs of administering this bill.
- 5) Provides that an unspecified sum of money is appropriated from the General Fund to the E-bike Reg Fund as a loan, available for encumbrance until an unspecified date, and directs the DMV to repay the General Fund loan, with interest, from monies the DMV receives from e-bike registration fees.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) This bill creates significant new regulatory and administrative workload for the DMV to adopt regulations and create a process to register e-bikes and issue plates to them. Costs will likely be in the millions of dollars for implementation and for ongoing administration (Motor Vehicle Account (MVA)).

While the DMV could not provide a precise estimate of its costs, it characterizes them as likely to be in the “multiple millions of dollars” (MVA). The DMV describes activities it would undertake to implement this bill as promulgating regulations, creating a new process to register e-bikes and issue plates, establishing acceptable proof of ownership or some way of identifying e-bikes that do not have unique identifiers, such as serial numbers, and accepting and processing registration applications from e-bike owners, which might number in the hundreds of thousands or the millions.

- 2) Cost pressure to the GF of an unknown, but surely significant amount, likely in the millions of dollars one time, to provide a loan to the E-bike Reg Fund.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of GF structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

- 3) Ongoing potential fee revenue of an unknown but likely significant amount, depending on the number of e-bikes that register with DMV (E-bike Reg Fund, GF).

The primary funding account for the California Highway Patrol and the DMV, the MVA faces insolvency. The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently advised, “Until a plan is put in place to address MVA’s structural deficit, we recommend the Legislature set a high bar for considering approval of any proposals that create additional MVA cost pressures and accelerate the risk of insolvency.”

COMMENTS:

The popularity of e-bikes has grown tremendously in recent years. Some sources report that annual e-bike sales exceed that of new cars. Not surprisingly, as e-bikes have become prevalent, so have conflicts between e-bike riders and other users of the road (and sidewalk, and bike path, and trail, and seemingly any other public space.) So, too, have injuries attributed to e-bikes grown.

But not every e-bike is an e-bike; at least, not as California law defines that term. According to California law, an e-bike is a two-wheeled or three-wheeled vehicle with pedals and an electric motor that produces no more than 750 watts of power. California law sorts e-bikes into three classes, as follows:

- **Class 1 — low-speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle.** The motor provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches a speed of 20 mph.
- **Class 2 — low-speed throttle-assisted electric bicycle.** The motor may provide assistance even when the rider is not pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 20 mph.
- **Class 3 — speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle.** The motor provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 28 mph.

Any vehicle that does not meet the definition of e-bike provided in California law is not considered an e-bike in California, as far as the law is concerned. This includes a bicycle-shaped

device with an electric motor capable of exceeding the speed limits described above. It also includes a device that, when sold, conformed to California law's definition of an e-bike but was subsequently modified—for example, the speed governor hacked to allow faster top speeds—so that it no longer meets the e-bike definition. Such electric devices may be many things, but, according to California law, they are not e-bikes. Many, or most, such devices require a license to operate and are subject to registration and insurance requirements. And some “e-bikes” are not e-bikes at all. As noted in the Assembly Transportation Committee analysis of this bill, a two-wheeled device that is capable of self-propelled speeds greater than 20 mph must be registered with the DMV as either as a moped (maximum legal speed of 30 mph), motor driven-cycle or a motorcycle, any of which current law requires to display license plates.

Mopeds, motor-driven cycles and motorcycles aside, “e-bikes” that are not e-bikes are common. The Mineta Transportation Institute (Mineta Institute) at San Jose State University studied e-bikes at the direction of legislation (SB 381 (Min), Chapter 869, Statutes of 2023). In a survey of middle and high schools in Marin and San Mateo counties, the Mineta Institute observed that 88% of the e-bike-like devices at Marin schools and 87% of such devices at San Mateo schools did not meet the state's definition of e-bike. It is not clear if these students, or, more likely, their parents, knew they were buying devices that were not legal e-bikes and illegal for them to ride on California public roads.

The author, noting the growing popularity of e-bikes, intends this bill to “keep pace to ensure safety and accountability on public streets, bike paths, and shared roadways.” According to the author:

While e-bikes provide a valuable and sustainable transportation option, their growing presence has also created new safety and accountability challenges. Data shows an alarming increase in e-bike collisions, with a notable increase in the severity of injuries. Currently, there is no clear system to identify e-bike riders when collisions occur, when reckless riding is observed, or when theft takes place. This lack of identification makes it difficult for law enforcement and communities to ensure responsible use. AB 1942 requires class 2 and class 3 e-bikes to be registered with the Department of Motor Vehicles and display a license plate, creating a mechanism to support enforcement, improve public safety, and promote responsible use while preserving e-bikes as a sustainable transportation option.

Supporters agree. For example, the California Emergency Nurses Association writes:

Across California, healthcare providers, first responders, and community members are increasingly seeing serious injuries associated with electric two-wheeled devices. When riders operate at high speeds, disregard traffic laws, or use devices that function more like motor vehicles than bicycles, the risk of severe trauma rises for riders, pedestrians, and motorists alike. Clear accountability measures that support timely identification can deter unsafe behavior, improve compliance, and assist law enforcement when violations occur.

AB 1942 addresses these concerns by strengthening accountability and enabling more effective enforcement.

Nonetheless, the bill is opposed by many organizations that advocate for cyclists and the AARP, among others, the latter of which writes:

While we share the author's concern for public safety on California's streets, this bill imposes motor vehicle-style burdens on a category of transportation that California law has long and rightly treated as bicycles—and in doing so, risks undermining one of the most promising mobility options available to older adults.

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