



Health Department

February 8, 2023

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE - HR
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2571 - Rebates for electric bicycles

Chair Pam March, Vice-Chairs Bobby Levy and Emerson Levy, and members of the Committee, my name is Andrea Hamberg and I am the Environmental Health Director for Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of of HB 2571.

Electric assisted bicycles hold promise as a way to increase physical activity, reducing the burden of chronic disease and premature death in our communities. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services recommends that adults should engage in at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity physical activity.¹ Like the state as a whole, only 25% of adults in Multnomah County met this recommendation in 2019.² Physical activity has a powerful protective effect against onset of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.³ For many of these diseases, we observe persistent racial and ethnic disparities. For example, the death rate from diabetes among the county's Black population has consistently been about three times the rate among the non-Hispanic white population. Active transportation, such as walking or bicycling, is one pathway to accumulate substantial physical activity for individuals while yielding health co-benefits at the population-level.

The assistance offered by e-bikes allows riders to traverse farther distances in less time and with less effort which can remove some of the barriers inherent to conventional bicycling. Despite the assistance, riding an e-bike is considered by health experts to be "moderate to vigorous" physical activity, as measured by heart rate and oxygen consumption, and has been shown to add to existing engagement with physical activity

¹ Department of Health & Human Services. (2019). *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans 2nd Edition*. https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf

² Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Program Design & Evaluation Services, Public Health Division, Oregon Health Authority.

³ Sundfør, H. B., & Fyhri, A. (2017). A push for public health: the effect of e-bikes on physical activity levels. *BMC Public Health*, 17(1), 809. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4817-3>

(i.e. it does not displace other exercise).⁴ The potential to reduce air pollution could further benefit health, especially in Multnomah County where exposure to air pollution is the highest in the state. E-bikes can also eliminate car trips and reduce tailpipe emissions, which are the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon according to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. A study found that people with e-bikes replace 62% of their trips with e-bike use that would have otherwise been done in a car.⁵

E-bikes offer affordable, basic mobility compared to cars, but the cost is a barrier for many households. In addition to the rebates themselves, we ask the committee to plan resources such as education, referrals, and navigation services, that make it easier to access these incentives for the people most in need of them.

Multnomah County Health Department urges your support of HB2571. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Thank you,
Andrea Hamberg
Environmental Health Director
Multnomah County Health Department

⁴ Jenkins, M., Lustosa, L., Chia, V., Wildish, S., Tan, M., Hoornweg, D., Lloyd, M., & Dogra, S. (2022). What do we know about pedal assist E-bikes? A scoping review to inform future directions. *Transport Policy*, 128, 25–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2022.09.005>

⁵ McQueen, M., MacArthur, J., Cherry, C. (2019) The E-Bike Potential: Estimating the Effect of E-Bikes on Person Miles Traveled and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. TREC White Paper. https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/peopleforbikes/dc0b2896-4a2c-4f35-af48-11df5cb9ea7e_E-bike-Potential-Paper-05_15_19-Final.pdf