

Submitter: Brent Bolton
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4007

Hello,

My background includes 25 years in the e-bike industry on both the manufacturing and retail sides. I was also a member of the Light Electric Vehicles Association legislative affairs committee and was involved in the debates over the California e-bike regulations that created the e-bike classes referenced in this legislation were being formulated.

One point I would like to make is that light electric vehicles are incredibly useful and their potential has hardly even begun to be tapped. Bearing that in mind, regulating them excessively carries the risk of preventing applications that we have yet imagine. As applied to this bill, rather than trying to eliminate non-complying e-bikes and other small EVs, create appropriate regulations that would allow them to be safely integrated into the transportation network. For example, e-bikes that go faster than 28 mph are arguably unsafe on most, but not all, bike infrastructure. So figure out where they can be safely used and classify them appropriately -- perhaps as small motorcycles requiring insurance and registration and allowed in certain bike lanes but not on paths that weren't specifically designed for them.

Another point concerns throttles. I'm annoyed by riders treating e-bikes as motorcycles and not pedaling at all as much as anyone. That's an abuse of throttle operation. But, there are also riders with physical limitations for whom throttles are an essential adaptive device. I believe California was wrong in banning throttles for that reason. I would advocate for language in the bill that specifically calls out throttles as an adaptive device allowed on any e-bike where there is a demonstrated need. As an illustration, I once had a customer in Astoria who could pedal normally most of the time, but she had a condition where she would unexpectedly lose muscle strength in her legs. She lived up a hill and without a throttle couldn't make it home if that occurred.

And there is another point about throttles that is less commonly understood. When used to start a stopped e-bike they are both a safety and an adaptive device. Many riders have difficulty starting from a stop, particularly with a heavily loaded e-bike such as one with a child on the back. To address that, add language that throttles are unconditionally allowed if they are only operational up to a certain speed. I would suggest 10mph, but that's a matter for legislative debate.