

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

Oregon legislators propose a series of changes to e-bikes

Oregon legislators are targeting e-bikes this session. One bill would have essentially made riding Class 3 e-bikes illegal in many situations where it is legal now.

Another bill would set up a rebate for e-bikes for people getting some sort of medical assistance from the state. And a third bill clarifies what is legal for children and e-bikes.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Portland, introduced Senate Bill 471, which would make it illegal to ride a Class 3 e-bike bicycle on a sidewalk, a bike path or a bike lane.

There are three classes of e-bikes. Class 1 bikes will assist someone who is pedaling up to 20 miles per hour. They don't have a throttle. Class 2 bikes have a throttle and go up to 20 miles per hour. Class 3 bikes can assist a person who is pedaling up to 28 miles per hour. They don't have a throttle. The classes can get tricky, of course, because some people modify their e-bikes to exceed their class.

If Prozanski's bill passed, anyone who owned a Class 3 bike would rightly be worried that it would make riding it illegal in many instances, except in traffic.

When questioned about the bill, Prozanski told BikePortland many things: Class 3 may have been a misnomer. He had been in a hurry to meet the filing deadline for bills. He was more concerned with what he sees out riding on multi-use paths with e-bikes with a throttle that don't require any pedaling. He said the bill could be a starting point for a conversation.

Our translation: This bill was a mistake. He did the right thing by withdrawing it from consideration.

A state rebate for e-bikes was proposed in 2023, with House Bill 2571. We thought it was a good concept if the money could be found. It basically would give Oregonians a rebate if they bought an e-bike. We didn't like, though, that the bill did not take the income of the individual seeking a rebate into account. An

amendment corrected that. The bill died anyway. It seems likely the estimated \$11 million cost had something to do with that.

Now, this session, there is another try at a rebate through House Bill 2963. It does something similar, offering rebates of up to \$1,200 for electric assisted bicycles that can assist someone only up to 20 miles per hour. Only people who are 16 or older and who are getting some kind of state medical assistance would qualify. The bill sets up \$6 million for the rebate program. Oregon's Environmental Quality Commission would create it.

We'd rather see an e-bike rebate program based on income, but this is a way to create a narrow program.

State Rep. Emerson Levy, D-Bend, is one of the legislators behind a third e-bike bill. It along with the rebate bill is scheduled for a hearing on Tuesday. House Bill 3626 would make some changes in the law to make it clear that children under 16 need to be wearing helmets when they are riding bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters and so on. It also permits children who are 12 and over to use e-scooters and certain e-bikes.

It says children who are 12 or older can operate Class 1 and Class 2 bikes, and a person 16 or older can also use a Class 3.

Of course, police are still going to face a challenge in enforcing the changes in the law under Levy's bill. But when a law is established and publicized, many people just do their best to fol-