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To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Path e-bike speed policy (TC agenda item #8)
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It is fair to single out e-bikes because the U.S. e-bike industry has done a **terrible** job of self-regulation. First, they supersized the U.S. e-bike standards to be twice as fast and three times as powerful as the established standards of Europe and Asia. Second, they make a mockery of their own supposed standards by selling e-bikes that are easily modifiable or outright non-compliant, often direct-to-consumer and without any regard for customer safety or local laws. Third, they've created an inconsistent mess of [state laws](#) that conflict with federal law, confuse customers, and burden local municipalities.

Additionally, the e-bikes themselves are larger, heavier, less maneuverable, slower to stop, and quicker to accelerate than regular bikes; all of which makes them more hazardous. Finally, e-bike riders can much more easily ride beyond their skill and experience than the riders of regular bikes can. In 2022, three of our five area bike fatalities involved e-bikes, and two of those were novice riders.

Madison should enact three laws:

1.
A city-wide path speed limit of 20mph for ALL users. If "Twenty is Plenty" is appropriate for our roads, it surely makes sense for our paths.
2.
Paths and off-street bike/ped infrastructure are limited to class 1 e-bikes only.
3.
All e-bike dealers in the City should have to share City-provided materials about e-bike rules with their customers.

The key to these laws is that #2 and #3 passively target the e-bike shopping experience so that compliance with law #1 will naturally improve over time without any enforcement as consumers gravitate to class 1 e-bikes. If the City ever does do an enforcement, no specialized training or equipment is needed – just look for the bikers who are speeding and/or not pedaling.

It's also important that these laws don't burden existing e-bike owners. City messaging should make it clear that existing class 2 and 3 e-bike owners who ride courteously and obey the 20 mph speed limit have nothing to fear from enforcement.

For reference, here are neighboring statutes about e-bike speed limits on paths:

- Wisconsin State Trails – 15mph for all e-bikes.
- Iowa - 20mph for class 3 e-bikes
- Michigan - only class 1 e-bikes allowed on paths
- Chicago - bans class 3 e-bikes from bike lanes and sidewalks, but is inconclusive about paths
- Minneapolis - enacted a 10mph speed limit for all bikes on park paths in 1981 after a pedestrian death. This law has survived repeated attempts to change despite modern path design that separates bikes from pedestrians.

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