

From: [Josh Olson](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: E-Bike Discussion
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Hi,

I'm discouraged to see once again e-bikes and speed are a topic of discussion. As an avid pedestrian and biker, this is not my top concern and I don't believe it should be anyone's as long as cars behave the way they do currently. Any resources, including TC meetings, spent on e-bike speeds when cars do so much more harm and damage is time wasted. Blaming bikers is sad and careless.

I'm willing to be wrong about this and if people who don't like E-Bike speeds can show me the data that pedestrians are more likely to be seriously injured or killed per VMT of bikes compared to cars, I am willing to support reforming the rules. But it is unserious and damaging to put limits on e-bikes rather than cars.

I love walking. I walk most evenings with my girlfriend, I walk to my bus stop, and I got to walk on the Southwest Commuter path when I was a university student. I recognized that walking on the path meant I needed to share it with others, including runners, bikers, and skaters. 99% of bikers are polite, either by leisurely biking or by announcing their presence with a bell or a call. I'm not hypocritical in stating bikers are rude if they announce their presence or rude if they don't. Bikers should announce their presence. And most do!

The majority of e-bikes require pedaling to function as well. Often times, it's road bikers who are going above 20 (because my class 1 bike stops helping me at 19.5 mph). But I don't blame the road bikers because they want a place that's safe to bike on for miles and the commuter path is one the few places they can do that! If there's one thing I would support doing, it's another speed study so we can have the data behind biker speeds, rather than questionable and subjective anecdotes.

When I'm walking to the bus, my head is on a swivel looking for cars. Cars exiting garages, cars turning onto streets I'm crossing, cars not slowing down at stop signs, cars going through red lights, cars trying to turn right when I'm approaching from their right, and their focus is entirely to traffic on their left. I don't have to act this way when I'm on the paths with e-bikes. I know the bikes will go past me and they won't hit me. Maybe it's because I'm a biker, and I know we don't pose as much of a threat to pedestrians as cars do, that I am able to relax on the paths. Cars consistently kill Madisonians and kill 40,000 Americans each year. A 50 lb E-Bike going 20 mph is not the same risk as a 2 ton truck going 45 in a school zone.

Speaking of, the streets (and roads) in Madison are not always safe for bikers. Two weeks ago I was nearly "doored" on W Washington and that easily could have injured me for several weeks. When I biked on Raymond Road, cars would consistently speed, approaching at least 50 mph. I was expected to be within 3 feet of them and feel "safe". When the Hammersly path completed, I started taking Hammersly instead, because I was separated from the cars and they didn't pose as much of a threat.

When it comes to the Commuter path, I always assumed by the name that the goal was to help move biking commuters through town in ways that were safe and faster than on the streets. I think it's great that walkers have reclaimed having safer and quieter walks away from the loud cars. But the Commuter path was the only way I could get from Elver Park to Downtown in about 25 minutes. Going on normal streets would put it closer to 45 minutes.

If the path is more popular now, we should expand it (either by making more path on this one path, or having more paths overall). Pedestrians and bikers recognize it as a safer and quieter alternative to streets. There should be more of these paths. But resources spent on blaming e-bikes and bikers is a waste of time. Make it so that people can bike and walk in more places instead.

Thank you,

Josh Olson