

# Ebike FAQ: Let's get outside and ride together- bikes are bikes.

By Carol Godwin, Cycle Mania

E-bikes are for everyone, every age, every body type and every reason. They are often misunderstood and provoke reactions varying from admiration and acceptance, to hatred and resistance, so let's put all that aside and dive into the whats, whys and hows of ebikes.

## What...

E-bikes are bikes that have an electric motor and which amplify the power put into the drivetrain by the rider. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed e-bike legislation, HB 2266, into law in April 2021. This bill defines an e-bike as a bicycle and designates class 1 ebikes to be considered non-motorized vehicles and to be allowed anywhere any other bicycle is allowed. Class 2 and 3 bikes are considered motorized vehicles, and are not generally allowed on non-motorized trails.

## Why...

When I say that ebikes are for everyone, I mean for everyone. There is a reason and a use for ebikes for people of all ages and fitness levels. Here are a few reasons that ebikes are being used in your community every day.

**Fun:** Ebikes are fun! The pedal assist gives riders a feeling of power and strength that feels legitimately their own because the power felt is an amplification of the power provided. Ebikes can give you that boost over a technical trail feature or let you take a relaxing evening ride with neighbors. Ebikes can allow you a ride with less effort and allow easy conversation between riders.

**Commuting:** Lets say you live 5-20 miles from your workplace or school and want to commute via bike. Commuting by bike has been shown to help reduce workplace fatigue and increase both physical and mental fitness. Ebikes allow you to arrive at work on time and ready to go without getting frazzled and sweaty and allow you to get home after a long day, feeling refreshed. Ebikes are ecofriendly,

use no gas and produce no pollution as you ride. Just plug it in to charge each night and you are ready for the trip to and from work.

**Recovery and Physical Therapy:** Recovery from injury or major joint surgery is painstaking, frustrating and often demotivating. An ebike allows a patient to vary the assist level from maximum assist at the beginning of their recovery to minimum assist as there is a gain in strength and mobility. Because cycling is virtually a no impact activity, it is one of the first physical activities that recovering patients can safely participate in.

**Age, health:** It's no secret that as we age, there is a corresponding loss of strength and mobility. An ebike allows previously active adults to continue their active lifestyle as they age and lets them participate in group rides with younger members without holding anyone back. Ebikes give older riders the confidence that they can participate in, and complete planned group rides. We have customers at our shop well into their 80's who regularly cycle both on the roads and on single-track. Cycling maintains and increases mental acuity and emotional fitness and regular use stabilizes mental health.

"My mental health has benefitted drastically since I have bought my ebike. Since the ebike allows me to ride more, my wife and I have both noticed that I have been happier since taking on this sport. It has been a huge benefit to my mental and physical health."- Kendall Whiting, ebike and cycling enthusiast

**Conquer climbs to enjoy downhills more:** Some riders are reluctant to participate in rides because they are not quite able to handle the ups, before enjoying the downs. An ebike can give a rider the little bit of assistance needed to make the climb and allow riders to range longer and farther than they could or would otherwise

"To me, ebikes have allowed me to pretty well keep up with seasoned mountain bike riders. ...it allows me to focus more on the fun part (the downhill). I feel that I have picked up on the techniques and skills of downhill faster since I am not exhausted from the uphills."-Whiting

**Altitude adjustment:** if you are an experienced, fit rider at a lower altitude, you may become frustrated and discouraged when you cannot perform at the same level when you increase altitude. An ebike levels the playing field for these riders so that they can perform at their best regardless of elevation change

**Weight loss:** There are multiple life-changing stories told, recounting weight losses of 100+ lbs and fitness gains due primarily to ebike use. Ebikes allow poorly fit or overweight individuals to get out and enjoy cycling as they lose weight and gain strength and experience. Many riders of non-ebikes began on ebikes and credit ebikes for getting them started on a life changing cycling adventure.

**Family fun:** Keep the family riding together longer by accepting ebikes as part of the way to equalize varying ability and fitness levels. There is no reason that everyone from kids to grandparents can't enjoy the same trails at the same speeds and with the same enjoyment.

**Beginners and group rides:** If you are getting into cycling as a beginner or returning to it later in life, an ebike can give you just the boost you need to be able to keep up with friends and gain confidence on the trail.

“Ebikes in general have helped me get back into the sport. I used to ride occasionally when I was younger, now with my ebike, I ride 3-4 times a week.”-Whiting

**Consistency:** studies show that ebike users are more likely to use their ebikes more often than their non-ebike using counterparts. Ease of use and amount of fun, make the ebike an easy choice for an afternoon adventure.

## **How...**

### **Choosing an ebike**

Decide on the planned use of your bike. There are ebikes ranging from road to comfort, and cruiser to mountain. Choose a bike that can handle the terrain you plan to ride in and choose a reputable brand that will provide support and maintenance. Many off-brand ebikes do not have licensed bike shops able to maintain the motors and/or computer systems in their bikes and may utilize difficult-to-replace non-standard sized parts. Do your research and choose a bike

that is allowed on the pathway you plan to use, find out about what maintenance is required and find a source for parts commonly needed (tubes, tires, chains).

If you plan to ride mountain bike single track, a class 1 Mountain ebike is the most reasonable choice. Considered a “bike” by most governing bodies, a class 1 bike is welcome on most trail systems. Class 1 bikes assist up to 20 mph, do not have a throttle and can be considered a mountain bike first and an ebike second.

If you plan to commute utilizing designated bike paths or paved trails, a class 1 or 2 ebike is most appropriate. Class 2 bikes have a throttle and a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph which will let you get to work with the least amount of effort so that you arrive refreshed. If you plan on utilizing bumpy roads, front shocks are a great asset.

If you plan to commute utilizing roadways or streets, a class 3 bike may be the most appropriate since they can travel at greater speeds. Class 3 bikes do not have throttles, assist to 28 mph and are allowed in bike lanes adjacent to streets, but not on designated bike paths.

“Ebikes are cheating” is a phrase heard repeatedly and so unnecessarily. Why are ebikes cheating? Who are you competing with to feel as though you have been cheated by an e-biker? Are you upset that grandma is “cheating” when she whips by you on a climb on a single track? Do you feel cheated that Joe lost 120 lbs riding an ebike? Do you feel cheated when an 8-year-old is able to keep up with dad on a trail using an ebike? Do you feel cheated when your best friend, just out of knee replacement surgery, is able to go ride with you? If you are a Stravaholic, remember that e-bikes have their own classification, so they are not competing for your KOM, so relax. Ebikes are a personal choice for so many reasons and every hour taken on an ebike is better than an hour on the couch. Get out there and enjoy life!