

Let's get outside and ride together- bikes are bikes.

By Carol Godwin, Cycle Mania

We ride as a group, younger riders, older riders, men, women, climbers, and descenders. Everyone is welcome, everyone is encouraged, and everyone is an encourager. We ride on bikes ranging from hybrid to gravel bikes. Hardtails to full suspension bikes and...e-bikes! Nobody is judging, nobody is feeling inadequate, nobody is really paying attention to who is riding what- we are all just glad to be out riding together, enjoying the weather, and focusing on the trail ahead of us. Why are some of us on e-bikes? E-bikes are for everyone, every age, every body type, and every reason. E-bikes 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, whens, and hows of e-bikes.

What?...

How do e-bikes work?

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 e-bikes 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?...

Who uses e-bikes?

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

Fun: E-bikes 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. E-bikes can give you that boost over a technical trail feature or let you take a relaxing evening ride with neighbors. E-bikes can allow you to ride with less effort and allow easy conversation between riders.

Commuting: Let's 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. E-bikes 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. E-bikes are eco-friendly, 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 e-bike 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 a very low-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 e-bike 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. E-bikes give older riders the confidence that they can participate in and complete planned group rides. We have customers at our shop well into their 80s who regularly cycle both on the roads and singletrack. 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 e-bike. Since the e-bike 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, e-bike 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 e-bike 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, e-bikes 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 e-bike 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 e-bike use. E-bikes 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-e-bikes began on e-bikes and credit e-bikes for getting them started on a life-changing cycling adventure.

Family fun: Keep the family riding together longer by accepting e-bikes as part of the way to equalize varying abilities 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 e-bike can give you just the boost you need to be able to keep up with friends and gain confidence on the trail. E-bikes give you the power to tackle more technical features on a trail and actually assist you in learning techniques that will be valuable on or off an e-bike in the future.

"E-bikes in general have helped me get back into the sport. I used to ride occasionally when I was younger, now with my e-bike, I ride 3-4 times a week."-Whiting

Consistency: Studies show that e-bike users are more likely to use their e-bikes more often and for longer distances and times than their non-e-bike using counterparts. Ease of use and amount of fun, make the e-bike an easy choice for an afternoon adventure.

When?...

Overcoming the mental obstacles

As previously stated, e-bikes are for everyone at any time, but there is often some resistance by older riders as to when an e-bike should become part of their regular riding routine. There is the idea that getting an e-bike is giving up, or showing weakness, and often people will say that they will get an e-bike when they can no longer ride a regular bike. This is a false concept because once you "can no longer ride", you have already lost critical muscle mass, and for older riders, it is extremely difficult to regain that lost muscle mass. The time to begin riding an e-bike is before you get to the point of no longer having the strength to ride because this will help you maintain the muscle mass you currently have. Regulated periodic use of an e-bike will ease the transition between normal bike use and e-bike use and will keep you riding with the groups you have always ridden with. If you have planned joint surgery coming up, using an e-bike prior to surgery to build muscle around the joint will help in recovery and give you the momentum you need to get to recovery as soon as possible after your procedure. Waiting until after the procedure is complete will leave you weeks behind on your recovery routine.

How?...

Choosing an e-bike

Decide on the planned use of your bike. There are e-bikes ranging from road and gravel to cruiser and 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 e-bikes 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 a mountain bike single track, a class 1 Mountain e-bike 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 e-bike second.

If you plan to commute utilizing designated bike paths or paved trails, a class 1 or 2 e-bike 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 it 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.

Final word...

Cheating? Really?

“Ebikes are cheating” is a phrase heard repeatedly and so unnecessarily. Why are e-bikes 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 e-bike? Do you feel cheated when an 8-year-old can keep up with dad on a trail using an e-bike? Do you feel cheated when your best friend, just out of knee replacement surgery, can go ride with you? Do you feel cheated that Dan, the neighbor is riding his e-bike on the trails daily? 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 e-bike is better than an hour on the couch curled up with a bag of chips. Get out there and enjoy life one pedal stroke at a time.