

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5968

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation Policy & Budget

Title: An act relating to electric-assisted bicycles.

Brief Description: Regulating electric-assisted bicycles.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Wood, Haugen and Prince.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation Policy & Budget: 4/2/97, 4/3/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION POLICY & BUDGET

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 22 members: Representatives K. Schmidt, Chairman; Hankins, Vice Chairman; Mielke, Vice Chairman; Mitchell, Vice Chairman; Fisher, Ranking Minority Member; Blalock, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cooper, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck; Cairnes; Chandler; DeBolt; Gardner; Hatfield; Johnson; Murray; O'Brien; Ogden; Radcliff; Robertson; Romero; Scott and Skinner.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background: Current law regulates the use of mopeds, which are two-wheeled vehicles powered primarily by a gas engine. mopeds may not be used on trails or in bike lanes. Moped riders must have a valid driver's license, and must comply with helmet laws applicable to motorcycles.

Bicycles are exclusively human-powered. Bicycles may be driven on bicycle paths, recreational trails (unless restricted or prohibited by local ordinance), and on public roads and highways (except for urban-area interstate).

Electric bicycles are a relatively new invention. They have an electric motor but are primarily human-powered cycles. Electric bicycles do not fit the definitions for mopeds or bicycles.

Summary of Amended Bill: Electric bicycles are defined as bicycles fully operative with pedals, but also having an electric motor capable of propelling the bike not more than 20 miles per hour.

Electric bicycles are exempt from vehicle registration and licensing requirements. No driver's license is required to operate an electric bike, although riders must be at least 16 years of age.

Provisions relating to bicycle helmets apply to riders of electric bikes. Electric bikes have the same access to trails, paths and public roads that regular bikes have, unless restricted by local jurisdictions.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Local jurisdictions are allowed to restrict access to trails and paths without having to post signs at each trail entrance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This legislation will allow these electric bicycles to be treated in the same manner as all other bicycles. These bikes are especially helpful to senior citizens.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Pat Thibaudeau, prime sponsor; Brad Rourke, Electric Transportation Company/ZAP Power Systems/Charger Bicycles; and Phil Miller, King County Department of Transportation (w/concerns).