

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6351

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 1, 1996

Title: An act relating to electric-assisted bicycles.

Brief Description: Regulating electric-assisted bicycles.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Prentice, Owen and Wood.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/24/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6351 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Morton, Oke, Prince, Rasmussen, Schow, Sellar, Thibaudeau and Wood.

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 Substitute Bill: Electric bicycles are defined as bicycles fully operative with pedals, but also having an electric motor capable of propelling the bike up to 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Language exempting electric-assisted bicycles from vehicle registration laws is clarified. Language requiring operators of electric-assisted bicycles to be at least 16 years old is clarified. No driver's license is required. Riders of electric-assisted bicycles must comply with all laws and regulations regarding the use of bicycle helmets.

Electric-assisted bicycles have the same access to trails, paths, roads and highways as regular bicycles, and must comply with all laws and ordinances regulating the speed and use of bicycles. The use of electric-assisted bicycles may be restricted by local ordinance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill allows use of emerging technology that promotes a clean environment.

Testimony Against: The bill should include provisions allowing local governments to restrict use on certain trails.

Testified: Senator Thibaudeau, prime sponsor; Chuck Anderson, University Mazda (pro); Brad Rourke, Electric Bicycle Co. of CA (pro); Mike Skahan, Alt-Trans (pro); Bill Morchin, Electric Bicycle Co. (pro); Phil Miller, King Co. Transp. Dept. (pro w/concerns).