



Statement Concerning Electric Bicycles Updated November 10, 2020

STATEMENT CONCERNING ELECTRIC BICYCLES

After much research, review of other policies and input from advocates across California, The California Mountain Biking Coalition (CAMTB) Board of Directors has developed a draft statement that reflects the input received from our membership organizations regarding e-Bikes and e-Mountain Bikes (e-MTB), hereafter referred to as “e-bikes”.

CAMTB is an organization which was born from the need to build consensus among off-road cycling and trail organizations across California. With e-bikes rising in popularity and quickly becoming a significant and growing user group both on and off-road, CAMTB believes it is in everyone’s best interest to provide clear guidance to public land managers and the communities in which we all ride regarding where and how to accommodate these new and quickly evolving bicycles. Technology is quickly improving with lighter and more integrated systems creating difficulty identifying e-bikes from traditional bikes on the trail. E-bikes have benefited bike shops and bike manufacturers as sales of these bikes are on the rise. Cyclists have also experienced the benefits of this new technology, allowing them to continue to enjoy the outdoors when potential health and mobility challenges might otherwise prevent or seriously limit their saddle time, and lowering the barriers to entry for newer riders.

Notably, California State Vehicle Code defines e-bikes as non-motorized bicycles; as long as its power output is no more than 750 watts, it has a saddle, includes fully operative pedals, and meets the criteria of the following classes according to California Vehicle Code 312.5:

- Class 1: E-assist only while pedaling, with a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.
- Class 2: Can be propelled solely by the motor, with a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.
- Class 3: E-assist only while pedaling, with a maximum assisted speed of 28 mph, and has a speedometer.

CAMTB’s intent in releasing an e-bike policy is to ensure that:

- The management baseline for the various classes of e-bikes is clearly understood and implemented in a consistent manner on publicly managed lands.

- California public land managers introduce Class I e-bike access on non-motorized trails in locations where the new technology may be appropriate and that decisions affecting where all types of bikes are allowed are made in consultation with local bicycle advocates and interested parties.
- E-bike management objectives for paved or otherwise improved surface non-motorized trails are separate from e-bike management objectives for natural surface and single track trails.
- Single track trail access is limited to Class 1 e-bikes only.
- E-bikes are clearly and consistently labeled in a manner that makes their identification by a layperson as different from entirely human-powered bikes easy and quick.
- All rules applicable to traditional bicycles apply to electric bicycles when they are being ridden.

As growing evidence¹ indicates, when ridden responsibly, the trail impact (per mile) of e-bikes is similar to that of traditional bikes. Knowing this, CAMTB supports the use of Class 1 e-bikes on all natural surface trails where bicycles are currently allowed, unless there are specific circumstances that warrant a prohibition of their use. Such circumstances include a public or private land manager who restricts their use, or a riding area or trail condition that justifies prohibiting e-bike use. Consistent with CAMTB's core tenet of supporting local control and engagement in making decisions affecting land use, CAMTB only supports such restrictions or allowances when the local cycling and multi-use trail community is included and engaged in the decision-making process.

Summary Position: CAMTB supports Class 1 e-bike use on any bike-legal non motorized trails unless their use is posted as prohibited by the land manager after consultation with the local cycling and trail user community. CAMTB also supports Class 1 and Class 2 e-bike access to roads, bike lanes and non-motorized paved and improved surface recreational trails, unless specifically restricted or signed closed by the local jurisdiction. CAMTB does not support the use of Class 2 or Class 3 bikes on natural surface trails, but supports their use on streets and unimproved natural surface routes constructed for and open to vehicular traffic or areas designated for off-highway vehicle or motorcycle use. Lastly, CAMTB believes prominent and consistent labeling for all e-bikes containing the classification number, top assisted speed, and motor wattage should be added to all e-bikes, as is required by California law.

CAMTB asks that cyclists check and follow local regulations prior to riding an e-bike and reminds all riders that the trail etiquette for e-bikes is the same as for all other bicycles; please yield to equestrians and hikers on shared-use trails and obey all relevant rules, including speed limits.

1. [eMTB trail resource study](#) (2015, with IMBA) and associated fact sheet