

February 15, 2024

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

Subject: HB 4103 E-bike regulations

Dear Committee Members:

Oregon cyclist fatalities have been mostly flat over time, but we still hear concerning news about deaths, including a recent 12-year-old boy in Hillsboro on a busy street. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Portland has a fatality rate of 3.2 deaths per million people, about 26% above the national average of 2.5.¹ Many more cyclists are seriously injured. The narrative cycling advocates often push is that drivers are responsible for these deaths, yet when investigations are completed, very few drivers are convicted of any violations. This indicates that cyclists bear some responsibility for these collisions. As someone with an engineering background who has studied safety and risk, I'm more concerned with how to reduce risk and less with assigning fault. When it comes to preventing deaths, the laws of physics, operator training, and design are far more important than fault. Blaming a driver, especially when there's no evidence of fault, won't bring back the life of a tragic collision victim.

When accidents happen, most times there are two parties making a mistake. If either a cyclist or a driver sees danger, the collision is usually avoided. We can't use blame to deny that fact. Oregon law treats bicycles as vehicles and in most areas, they must operate on streets in or near auto traffic. Yet, we don't require any licensing or training for people operating bicycles. No country I'm aware of does this, yet that's not an excuse for looking at the situation objectively and realizing that operating any vehicle on a road with traffic needs to require training and licensing of the operator. If we add e-bikes into this situation, even the Class 1 bikes in HB 4103, this will make matters even worse for children who aren't trained and don't understand the deception that a motor-propelled bike can cause added danger. Just as drivers become "velocitized" and can be unaware of how fast a car is traveling, cyclists on e-bikes can also be fooled. In my neighborhood, I watched a teen take an e-bike around a corner too quickly and lose control, falling on the road into the opposite lane at a spot where a driver wouldn't have any time to stop safely. It could have been serious if this were on a busy street.

We need to instead look at a more thoughtful approach of requiring all bicycle operators using the road to be trained and licensed, just as we do with drivers. Cycling advocates will complain that this will slow cycling adoption, but that's not true. If we integrate training into school curricula, just as we do with driver training, every student can receive safety instruction that will make them a safer, more aware road user. If they are driving in the future, they will also know more about the cyclist's perspective. In addition, mandatory training could accelerate cycling adoption and reduce carbon emissions from transportation in a safe and effective way rather than what we do now, which is to let cyclists learn from mistakes that can sometimes end in injury or death. We can't normalize the idea of letting people make fatal mistakes when we already know how to avoid them. Please protect our kids and make licensing and training of cyclists a part of educating Oregon's youth.

Sincerely,



Chris Carvalho

¹ "Pedestrian Fatalities per Capita over Time." Web: <[TOPIC IV: BIKING & WALKING ROAD SAFETY – Benchmarking Report By the League of American Bicyclists \(bikeleague.org\)](#)>