



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 25-17
November 12, 2025
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PRC 25-17: E-Bike Regulations Study Session	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive Report. No action necessary.	

STAFF:	Ryan Daly, Recreation Manager Sam Harb, Parks Operation Manager Amelia Tjaden, Management Analyst
EXHIBITS:	n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to seek direction from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and the Open Space Conservancy Trust (OSCT) on whether electric bikes (e-bikes) should be allowed in parks and open spaces and additional considerations for their use.

- Mercer Island has seen an increase in usage of e-bikes, electric scooters (e-scooters), and electric motorcycles/electric dirt bikes (e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes) over the past two years.
- On May 20, 2025, the City Council amended the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the development of an ordinance regulating the operation of e-bikes and e-motorcycles on the Island ([AB 6688](#)).
- E-bikes are bicycles that are assisted by an electric motor. There are three classes of e-bikes, distinguished by the e-bike's maximum assisted speed and how electric assistance is provided.
- E-motorcycles are distinct from e-bikes because they are larger and heavier, have a motor with a higher power output and can reach much greater speeds. In September 2025, the Mercer Island City Council adopted Ordinance No. 25C-24 establishing regulations for e-motorcycles ([AB 6772](#)).
- Considerations to be considered include impacts to other trail users, accessibility, and micromobility.

BACKGROUND

Mercer Island has seen an increase in usage of electric bikes (e-bikes), electric scooters (e-scooters), and electric motorcycles/electric dirt bikes (e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes) over the past two years. Many of the riders are 12-15 years of age and often demonstrate unsafe riding behaviors, creating a danger to themselves and others.

On May 20, 2025, the City Council amended the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the development of an ordinance regulating the operation of e-bikes and e-motorcycles on the Island ([AB 6688](#)).

E-Bikes

Under [RCW 46.04.169](#), e-bikes are bicycles that are assisted by an electric motor. There are three classes of e-bikes, distinguished by the e-bike's maximum assisted speed and how electric assistance is provided.

- Class 1 e-bikes assist up to 20 mph and only provide electric assistance when the rider is pedaling.
- Class 2 e-bikes assist up to 20 mph but can propel the bike without pedaling using a throttle.
- Class 3 e-bikes assist up to 28 mph using a pedal assist and/or a throttle. These e-bikes have additional rules, including a minimum age of 16.

Currently, class 1 and class 2 e-bikes can be ridden anywhere traditional bikes are permitted – including mixed-use trails, bike lanes, and roads – unless otherwise noted. Class 3 e-bikes can be ridden on roads and paved trails that allow motorized vehicles but are not allowed on soft surface trails. Class 3 e-bikes are also prohibited on sidewalks and on shared-use paths.

E-Scooters

Under RCW [46.04.336](#), e-scooters are scooters powered by an electric motor that have a maximum speed of 20mph. E-scooters are subject to many of the same laws as e-bikes, with a few important distinctions:

- E-scooters cannot be ridden on sidewalks or soft-surface trails.
- E-scooters have a minimum rider age of 16.
- The speed limit for e-scooters is 15 mph on any roadway or bicycle lane.

E-Motorcycles

In September 2025, the Mercer Island City Council adopted Ordinance No. 25C-24 establishing regulations for e-motorcycles ([AB 6772](#)). Under the ordinance, e-motorcycle means a motorcycle, as defined by [RCW 46.04.330](#), which is powered by an electric motor and:

- Is not equipped with fully operable pedals capable of propelling it. Foot pegs are not considered pedals; or
- Has a motor with a power output that exceeds 750 watts; or
- Has a motor that continues to provide assistance when the vehicle reaches the speed of twenty-eight miles per hour.

This means that any vehicle that travels on two or three wheels has a handlebar and a seat, has an electric motor, and meets any of the conditions listed in the definition, is an electric motorcycle and subject to the corresponding regulations. This definition includes the e-motorcycles seen on the Island, e-dirt bikes, e-bikes that have been modified to exceed 28mph, as well as vehicles powered solely by a throttle that do not go faster than 28mph. These vehicles will be subject to the requirements for operating a motorcycle.

The ordinance will go into effect on January 1, 2026. E-motorcycles, like other motorized vehicles, are only allowed in parks on roads and in parking lots if they are properly licensed. Violations of these regulations are civil infractions, subject to impound and financial penalties.

Current Park & Trail Rules

The City of Mercer Island has created a growing neighborhood and park trails system with linkages between parks and across the Island. The existing trails comprise 28.5 miles of trail facilities providing many opportunities for connecting to outdoor recreation locations and other destinations. [MICC 9.30.150](#) establishes the regulations for operating vehicles in parks.

Under RCW [46.61.710](#), e-bikes and e-scooters cannot be ridden on trails marked as non-motorized and trails with a natural dirt surface. In effect, this means e-bikes and e-scooters cannot be ridden in Pioneer Park, Upper Luther Burbank Park, Island Crest Park ravine, or anywhere where posted signs prohibit motorized vehicles. The City has other specialized facilities, like the Skate Park and Bike Skills Area, that have rules developed specifically for these locations. However, the RCW allows a City to permit the operation of e-bikes and e-scooters on these trails.

Other Jurisdictions

Various jurisdictions in King County have adopted local regulations for e-bikes and e-scooters. The regulations vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some examples include:

- King County Parks Code allows class 1 and class 2 e-bikes on regional trails and paved pathways within park areas and prohibits class 3 e-bikes from any trails or pathways within park areas ([KCC 7.12.315](#)).
- The City of Everett prohibits all e-bikes and e-scooters in any park, except in designated areas in areas vehicles are permitted, like parking lots ([EMC 9.06.134](#)).
- The City of North Bend prohibits class 3 e-bikes on trails and within parks ([NBCC 12.04.190](#)).

Trail Classifications

The [Parks, Recreation, & Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#) describes categories for the recreational trail classification system. While some sections of trail will accommodate higher volumes of traffic and provide regional connections, other sections may rely on the local street network and be designed to link local or neighborhood destinations. The trail categories include:

- **Shared-Use Paved Trails:** Shared-use paved trails serve as connections that link neighborhoods, parks, schools, and Town Center. This trail type is paved with either asphalt or concrete and should be a minimum of 10' wide with one-foot shoulders on each side of the trail. Typical trail users include pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with other wheeled devices. Some bicyclists use these routes for commuting purposes.
- **Neighborhood Links:** Neighborhood linkage trails are multi-use pedestrian walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian connections that link neighborhoods and other open spaces, parks, and schools. They provide the functional network of the trail system and are designed to be used by a variety of nonmotorized users. They consist of both soft-surface and hard-surface materials and vary in width.
- **Natural Surface Trails:** Natural surface trails provide connections to remote and unique natural areas within or adjacent to the community. Ideally, natural surface trails should connect to multi-use paved trails. Natural surface trails are generally 2-4' wide. Typical trail users include hikers and mountain bikers.
- **Park Trails:** Numerous City parks include pathways, sidewalks, and hiking trails, etc., that provide access to the park and circulation within the parks.

Enforcement

The Mercer Island community has been active in reporting unsafe and illegal behaviors on e-bikes and e-motorcycles. While the primary complaints revolve around e-motorcycles, the City has received complaints of e-bikes and e-scooters operating in the skate park, racing around the sidewalks at Mercerdale Park, and impacting reservations groups at the South Mercer Playfields and at Island Crest Park.

Staff encourages community members witnessing unsafe and illegal behaviors involving e-bikes, e-scooters, and e-motorcycles to call 911 to report the incident immediately. Calling 911 is the fastest way to deploy law enforcement to an incident and stop these behaviors as they are happening.

Currently, when feasible, Mercer Island Police Department (MIPD) will attempt to contact youth riding these vehicles. If warranted, MIPD will call their parents or guardian to pick up the youth and their vehicle. MIPD reminds the parents and the child of the dangers of these types of vehicles and informs parents of the regulations around their use.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

On May 20, 2025, the City Council amended the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the development of an ordinance regulating the operation of e-bikes on the Island ([AB 6688](#)). The ordinance could establish boundaries for where users could ride class 1, 2, & 3 e-bikes, including restrictions on parks and trails. The purpose of this agenda item is to seek direction from the PRC and the OSCT on whether e-bikes should be allowed in parks and open spaces and additional considerations for their use, with the OSCT providing feedback specific to the Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space properties, and the PRC providing input for

all other park and open space areas. Regulations for e-scooters could be also considered as part of this ordinance. Questions that could be considered as part of this discussion include:

- Are there places where e-bikes should be prohibited? This could include synthetic turf fields, soft surface trails, playgrounds, sport courts, or areas designated as open space.
- Should the City regulate e-bikes differently than regular bikes?
- Should e-scooters be regulated differently than e-bikes?
- Are there classes of e-bikes that should not be permitted in parks or on trails?
- Are there certain parks/locations that we should designate as bike-free/pedestrian only?

Considerations

Impacts on Other Trail Users

PRC and OSCT should consider the impacts of instituting regulations for e-bikes to other trail users, including runners, walkers, bikers, and equestrians. E-bikes could have an impact on other trail users through concerns about safety, due to higher speeds and torque, and potential environmental damage like erosion and habitat disturbance. Key considerations include trail width, resting and passing areas, and maximum speed.

Accessibility

PRC and OSCT should consider the impacts of instituting regulations to people with disabilities and/or people requiring mobility devices. On one hand, e-bikes can provide access to trails for people who may have mobility challenges or find traditional bikes too strenuous, allowing them to enjoy nature. E-bikes can enable riders to cover more ground or tackle more difficult routes, extending their range and experience on the trail.

However, the speed and size of e-bikes can also create user conflicts with people using mobility devices, as defined under RCW [46.04.1695](#). One option to promote ADA accessibility would be to designate certain trails as walking only, including ADA devices. Using signage, these trails would be exclusively for pedestrians and people utilizing mobility devices. E-bikes and bicycles would not be allowed on these trials.

Micromobility

One goal of the [Climate Action Plan](#) is to reduce greenhouse gas emission from transportation by transitioning to electric vehicles, expanding multimodal transportation options, and improving cycling and pedestrian networks. With the opening of the Sound Transit Light Rail Station expected in 2026, staff anticipate an increased need for connection between Town Center and other parts of the Island.

E-bikes provide an opportunity to promote micromobility to various groups, as e-bikes are an accessible and often inexpensive alternative to single-occupancy vehicle travel. Commuters could utilize the Island's vast trail system to travel to/from Town Center on an e-bike. Similarly, park users arriving using transit and other micromobility solutions reduces the need for on-site parking at parks.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will develop a policy statement for where e-bikes should be allowed based on the feedback received from the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Open Space Conservancy Trust. Staff anticipate a second joint meeting between these two bodies to approve this policy statement and present recommendations for its implementation.

Finally, staff will use these recommendations to prepare an ordinance establishing regulations for e-bikes for City Council consideration.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive Report. No action necessary.