



CITY OF NOVI CITY COUNCIL OCTOBER 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Discussion regarding potential electric bicycle (e-bike) ordinance

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: City Manager's

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Finance and Administration Committee at their recent meeting discussed possible laws governing the use of e-bikes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The popularity of electric bicycle use in Michigan accelerated beginning in approximately 2020. Michigan municipalities are increasingly confronting electric bicycle issues that are somewhat different from the traditional bicycle problems. The principal concerns are speed, young or inexperienced operators, sidewalk and trail conflicts, difficulty distinguishing legal electric bicycles from higher-powered electric vehicles, and enforcement. Bicycle riders on sidewalks must yield to pedestrians and give an audible signal before overtaking or passing a pedestrian. Electric bicycle riders approach pedestrians considerably faster and with less physical effort than a traditional bicycle.

Michigan's state-level Motor Vehicle Code permits Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles to provide motor assistance up to 20 mph and Class 3 electric bicycles to provide assistance up to 28 mph. Those speeds can be problematic on a sidewalk, narrow pathway, park walkway, or heavily used shared-use trail even though they may not be excessive when traveling on a roadway.

The Motor Vehicle Code does not establish a general minimum age for Class 1 or Class 2 electric bicycles. For a Class 3 electric bicycle, an operator must be at least 14, and persons under 18 operating or riding as a passenger on a Class 3 electric bicycle must wear a helmet. Consequently, municipalities can encounter relatively young riders operating Class 1 or Class 2 devices capable of motor-assisted speeds of 20 mph.

Electric bicycles are different from what have come to be called "e-motos," which are more like motorcycles or dirt bikes than regular bicycles. Unfortunately, e-motos have become almost more prevalent than e-bikes.

Recent incidents involving juveniles have contributed to Michigan municipalities examining additional regulations. For example, in Bloomfield Township, two 13-year-olds were critically injured while crossing Telegraph Road on an electric vehicle (though reports indicate that device was an “e-moto” vehicle rather than an e-bike). Last week in Farmington Hills, a 9-year-old girl was hit by an e-moto as she exited her school bus.

Staff has come to better understand the laws governing e-motos. Individuals who intend to operate them should consider them as similar to owning and operating a motorcycle. Registration and insurance are necessary to use them on a public street or road. They cannot be operated on bike paths or sidewalks. Individuals under the age of 21 must wear a helmet when riding an e-moto and again must meet the 16-year-old licensing criteria.

How other communities are currently addressing e-bikes:

Community	Regulatory approach
South Lyon	Permits qualifying e-bikes on the Rail Trail with a 15-mph speed limit; restricts downtown sidewalk riding.
Berkley	Prohibits e-bikes and e-motos on all city sidewalks and in parks. Also restricts other micromobility devices in designated areas.
Dearborn Heights	Prohibits all three e-bike classes on city-owned property, including parks, greenways, recreational areas and municipal facilities.
Port Huron	Pursued targeted downtown and waterfront restrictions, with lower speed limits on other sidewalks. The September 14 th proposal was at first reading; final adoption should be confirmed.
Farmington	Council voted unanimously to have the city attorney draft an ordinance banning e-bikes, e-scooters, and other small vehicles from downtown sidewalks and city parks.
Clinton Twp.	Revised their ordinance regulating electric bicycles on township property. Ordinance revisions include a revised definition to ensure clarity on what an e-bike is per township ordinance. Other changes included requiring helmets for riders younger than 18, limiting operating speeds to no more than 10 mph on township property, placing limits on e-bike use in township parks, and establishing fines for ordinance violations.
Grosse Ile	Permits traditional bicycles, Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes, and electric scooters/skateboards on sidewalks and shared-use pathways, subject to a 15-mph maximum speed limit and requirements to operate safely around pedestrians. Riders must yield to pedestrians and provide an audible warning before passing on the left. Class 3 e-bikes and mopeds are prohibited on sidewalks. Additionally, the Township prohibits electric bicycles, electric

scooters/skateboards, and mopeds on unpaved trails, in nature areas, and in environmentally sensitive locations.

Marquette Permits Class 1, 2 and 3 e-bikes, electric scooters, skateboards and other qualifying electric mobility devices with motors not exceeding 750 watts on designated multi-use pathways. The City prohibits reckless riding and excessive speeds, requires riders to maintain control, keep right and pass safely, and restricts electric mobility devices on sidewalks throughout much of the downtown district. High-powered e-motos and electric dirt bikes are prohibited on multi-use pathways. Non-street-legal e-motos are also prohibited on city streets and sidewalks

Additional information from SEMCOG, including a [September 2, 2026 SEMCOG University workshop session](#).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Discussion regarding potential electric bicycle (e-bike) ordinance.