

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDING E-BIKES SAFELY TO OUR STREETS

I write to you as an avid bicyclist for over 50 years

I have ridden bicycles in all possible terrains, including New York City □ and I have lived in Key West / Stock Island for over 30 years using my bicycle as my main means of transportation.

First of all, I think it's important to make clear for what term will be used for E Bikes. E Bikes should not be referred to as "electric bicycles". Bicycles are still thought to be powered by humans and so travel slower. If the E Bike is referred to as an electric bicycle, it might insinuate that the E Bike is not as fast as it truly is. It is important to clarify and separate the terms so the public can understand the E Bike, as a motor powered vehicle that can travel as fast as 30 MPH, so the public can have a better understanding of the two modes of transportation. Many of the streets have a speed limit of 25 MPH, and as low as 15 MPH, so it is possible for the E Bike to travel at a dangerous speed and get a speeding ticket.

I think it's great that we have E-Bikes.

E Bikes can take cars off the road, they are better for the environment, less stress in finding parking, lessens car traffic and air/noise pollution. It is an easier and faster means of transportation to work for some. So, if safe rules and regulations could be constructed it would benefit everyone.

Create safe rules NOW

Safe rules should be created now as this is the beginning of E Bikes transportation, before they become so popular that E Bikers create their own rules and bad habits which become hard to break. Understand that E-Bikes will be constant "Passing Vehicles" if allowed on the sidewalks of North Roosevelt and South Roosevelt Blvds, because E-Bikes travel faster than bicycles and pedestrians, so it is important to keep this in mind for any decisions the commission makes. Adding E-Bikes to sidewalks where pedestrians walk puts pedestrians in danger. As the pedestrian is walking, they don't have a mirror to see who is behind them. A pedestrian can easily be hit by turning left (or right) as they are walking. We have to remind pedestrians, tourists and locals, to be aware of the E Bikes and to look behind before turning.

What it's like to share the road with E Bikes

In general, I do not feel comfortable riding my bicycle, knowing that e-bikes share the same path or road, and that opinion comes from experience riding my bicycle here in the Keys. E Bikes will pass me quietly, and very fast, with no warning which startles me. If they have a bell, I can't hear it. I have a mirror on my handle bar, and I will glance from time to time, to check what's behind me. Many of the sidewalks, bicycle paths are not wide enough to accommodate two bicycles, and so when a bicycle is passing, the slower bicycle needs to move over to the right – closer to the edge of the road. Once when I was riding my bicycle, I swayed out of my lane just a bit, and that was the moment when an E-Bike passed me, narrowly missing me and scared the heck out of me. I want to stress that I was leaning towards the middle of the road, just a little, and that is how close riding a bicycle or E-Bike is for riders on our roads, because our roads are normally not wide enough to safely accommodate opposing traffic, pedestrians walking with another person side by side, etc. The roads are tight, one needs to be cautious at all times and now with the addition of these quiet and fast E Bikes, it makes travel more stressful and dangerous. It's not easy to enjoy my bicycle rides.

A special horn should be required of all e-bikes

E-bikers should have a way to alarm pedestrians and bicyclists that they want to pass. Hearing a "special horn" and loud enough would let those in front know, that a semi-fast E-Bike is approaching. This "special horn" should be a distinct sound, loud enough, and sounded off at a safe distance behind, because they are traveling fast and come up quickly. A bell may not be heard at a safe distance behind, and you want the early warning of an E Bike to give those in front enough time to get quickly move to the right.

A tall yellow flag should be required of all e-bikes

E-Bikes travel faster than bicycles and because E-Bikes are so new to our city, they can be dangerous for poor judgement of their accurate speed, so we must be cautious. I've seen some "conch bicycles" (which looks like old, beat up bicycles) turned into E-bikes. You can make a judgement on the type of bicycle coming your way. If the handlebars are French style, tall monkey bars, regular handle bars that require the bicyclist to sit up right, if it is a 10 speed bicycle, a racer bicycle, if you see handle brakes or only pedal foot brakes.... All these can indicate what speed the bicycle can travel. So, when drivers are waiting at a stop sign, and they see what appears to be a "bicycle" coming their way, if it actually is an E-Bike traveling at a faster speed than a bicycle It could make a huge difference. The driver needs to understand the speed of this oncoming vehicle, to decide to wait for the E-Bike to pass, or to leave the intersection. You need to understand also, that with so much traffic in the Keys, cars don't want to miss a light, or miss the opportunity to clear the intersection to get onto the main road, because they have been waiting for so long already. So when a car spots a bicycle coming..... is it a slow peddled bicycle, or a fast E Bike? If the car makes the wrong judgement, then an accident can happen.

When riding a bicycle, if you have a mirror, you can see a bicycle or E-Bike coming behind you. If you see a tall yellow flag – you know to stay in your lane and to veer to the right to let the E-Bike pass. Faster vehicles (whether car or E-Bike or bicycles) will want to pass slower vehicles. Therefore, a tall yellow flag should be required of all e-bikes, so that every other means of transportation can know the vehicle approaching them, will be moving faster than a bicycle.

With the addition of E-Bikes - Pedal bicycles should have a bell and mirror on their handle bars

We have a law already that bicycles should have front and rear lights, but with the addition of E Bikes, they should also have mirror and bell to better protect themselves and others with the ability to view what is behind them and to warn others in front of them.

All E-Bikes should have liability insurance in case of an accident for the other person

The greater the speed, the greater the injury.

All E-Bikes should be registered

E-Bikes should be registered as a moped, at the DMV, with license plates on the back. If any E-Bike is stolen, it will be easier to find once registered. E-Bikes can be very expensive and we may see a surge in stolen E-Bikes. E Bikes should have directional signals to indicate to traffic behind they are turning, and hand signals used to indicate to traffic in front they are turning. Mirrors on both sides of handle bars must be required so they can see if they can safely change lanes.

Bicycles should also be registered

With the onset of E-Bikes, changes and adjustments must be made and it is a good time that Bicycles be required to register their bicycles with the City of Key West. This would fix problems when old bicycles are left locked up on bicycle racks for months (are obviously abandoned), they then can easily be identified and the owner told to take it away. Stolen bicycles can be reported and put on lookout for bicycles on sale on Facebook, or neighbor to neighbor. The buyer can read the registration number to confirm if it's not a stolen bicycle. Knowing the number of registered bicycles can indicate to the City of Key West, how many bicycle racks are needed. These bicycle registrations can indicate how many are on the road. At the time of the bicycle registration, someone from the city see if the bicycle has the required: front and back lights, mirror on left side of handle bar and bell.

E Bikes belong on the street with other motor vehicles.

Currently, we have golf carts on the streets. E Bikes can travel faster. It makes sense to put E Bikes in their correct lane to travel. As it stands now, the city has decided that E-Bikes cannot travel on sidewalks with the exception of: Atlantic, South and North Roosevelt Blvd's. However, on these sidewalks are ramps to go up or down to cross the intersection. They were made for wheelchair access and they are narrow. Their space has to be judged precisely, and bicyclists will slow down to go up or down them. There also exists huge

obstacles on the boulevards, such as the poles for the pedestrian cross lights, regular lamp posts and trees. The entrances to home depot and hotels on North Roosevelt Blvd are very very dangerous. Cars exiting these businesses have a hard enough time clearing their exists with the current traffic and E-Bikes create more difficulty because of their speed and appearance as a pedaled bicycle.

Because of the speed E-Bikes travel, they should go on the streets with the other traffic for their own safety and also to expedite their travel so not to constantly slow down. E Bikes can keep up with street traffic and would be safer to travel in the streets versus traveling up and down the sidewalk ramps. These boulevards should be enjoyed by pedestrians, wheel chairs and bicycles because these are the slower traffic.

What about the 3 wheeled E Bikes?

Another consideration the commission must include are the E-Bikes with 3 wheels. Once a pedaled tri-cycle, these E-Bike Tricycles take up a huge amount of space on the road. If you have a E-Bike Tricycle on the side walk, they truly add greater trouble to the flow of traffic. They dominate and make it very difficult for others to share the road with them. Someone has to get off the road. For sure, the Tri-Bikes need to stay off the sidewalks.

You want to encourage safe E-Bike riding

There is too much traffic on our streets. One way to alleviate the congestion is to create a safe way for E-Bikes to travel. Without clear rules and regulations, the driver is unsure and uncomfortable.

E-Bikes should travel with traffic, in car lanes, and bear a tall yellow flag on it's rear so cars will know they are an E-bike and can keep up with traffic. Get E-Bikes out of bicycle lanes and leave the bicycle lanes free for pedal bicycles. On North Roosevelt, where the speed limit is 35, E-Bikes need to be on the right lane of the street. Where the speed falls to 30 and below, E-Bikes should be allowed to take either lane.

Don't forget to encourage regular pedal bicycle riding

With such horrible traffic, if the City of Key West would build safe pedal bicycle roads (which we do not have now), many more locals and tourists would use this method. Adding special traffic lights for bicyclists and pedestrians should be added to our current traffic lights to allow bicyclists and pedestrians to go first at an intersection, then allow cars to go. This gives time to clear the intersection in case a car will turn.

Bicycle racks should be provided. Look at Copenhagen and Amsterdam for guidance and ideas.

PS.

South Roosevelt Blvd.

Pedestrian traffic use on South Roosevelt side walk has increased tremendously. I feel that E-Bikes as well as bicycles should stay off the side walk. Even though the sidewalk is wide, it is a different type of pedestrian traffic. People are walking leisurely, speed walking, coming in and out of the beach casually and not cautiously. I feel that locals and tourists should have a dedicated place to walk safely.

Sincerely

DIANE BERULDSEN – STOCK ISLAND