

Palm Coast's new e-bike ordinance includes age limit, makes modified e-bikes illegal

PALM COAST — Amid rising safety concerns related to e-bikes, the Palm Coast City Council Tuesday, Oct. 7, voted 4-1 to adopt an ordinance requiring e-bikers abide by traffic rules, imposing an age limit for riders, and prohibiting the use of modified e-bikes.

Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, the lone dissenter, disagreed with prohibiting children under 11 from riding e-bikes in the city, arguing it was a “government overstep.”

However, the board voiced unanimous support for the measure given the recurrence of incidents with the electric vehicles this year.

“We have had quite a few incidents with reckless driving with some of the (e-bikes) that have been modified and turned into this off-road, non e-bike machines, that have been very dangerous and have caused some trouble,” Pontieri said during the meeting.

Board members and residents shared several instances of e-bikes zipping through traffic (sometimes going against traffic), traveling too fast on sidewalks and posing a danger to pedestrians, and more.

The board considered language clarifying what constitutes an e-bike, especially considering how it compares to regular bikes; helmet requirements and penalties for those who violate the new city law.

Here are the new e-bikes rules in Palm Coast:

What is an e-bike?

An e-bike is a regular bike with a battery-operated motor that provides extra power to the rider. It makes obstacles like hills and headwind more manageable and allows you to travel farther without getting as tired.

Electric scooters are similar to e-bikes but riders operate the vehicle from a stand-up position on the footboard. On the handlebars, there is a throttle control that allows you to control your speed. There are also brake levers mounted to the handlebars.

But the city looked at the definition of e-bikes under Florida Statute to determine its ordinance’s language.

“An electronic bike or e-bike means a bicycle or tricycle equipped with fully operable pedals, a seat or saddle for the use of the rider, and an electric motor of less than 750 watts,” the ordinance reads.

They are divided into three classes:

- “Class 1: E-bikes are pedal-assist only, with no throttle, and have a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.
- Class 2: E-bikes having a maximum speed of 20 mph, but are throttle-assisted.
- Class 3: E-bikes which are pedal-assist only, with no throttle, and a maximum assisted speed of 28 mph.”

Modifications to an e-bike’s software allows for the vehicle to reach speeds well above 28 mph, which is why the city removed modified e-bikes from the ordinance’s definition.

What are the new rules for e-bikes in Palm Coast?

- The new ordinance codifies that e-bikes “may be operated on bicycle lanes, bicycles paths, roadways and sidewalks,” which also applies for regular bicycles.
- The new rules require e-bikers to comply with all traffic regulations, including “yielding the right-of-way to any pedestrian” and giving “an audible signal before overtaking and passing such pedestrian.”
- In addition, all residents operating an e-bike must be carrying a government-issued photo ID, which includes “a driver license, passport, military ID ... or comparable government ID displaying an individual’s name, date of birth, and photograph.”
- The new ordinance makes it illegal to operate an e-bike “in an unsafe and reckless manner to include but not limited to excessive speed.”
- “The operation of an e-bike that produces more than 750 watts of power is prohibited on the roadways, sidewalks, right-of ways, bicycle paths, and bicycle lanes” within the city.
- E-bikes without pedals that have modified propulsion systems, which increases speed, cannot be operated within city-owned bike lanes, paths, sidewalks or property controlled by the city.
- Violators can receive a fine of up to \$100 for each violation, according to the ordinance.

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