

What to Know About E-bikes in PA?



Photo: Rad Power Bikes

E-bikes (bicycles with electric motors to assist) can be a great way for people to enjoy transportation with movement. E-bikes can be helpful for those returning from a sedentary lifestyle, illness, or those with physical limitations. E-bikes can also provide a “boost” for someone to bicycle a greater distance at higher speed, replacing/reducing their dependency on cars.

Driving an e-bike requires situational awareness:

- on trails - slow down and communicate when passing pedestrians, children, and animals.
- minimize sidewalk/crosswalk riding - sightlines can be limited
- practice e-bike handling skills at slow speeds as unexpected acceleration can cause a crash

E-bikes under Pennsylvania law

Under Act 154 of 2014, E-bikes are classified as bicycles/pedalcycles with the following requirements:

- Rider must be **at least 16 years old** (driver’s license not req’d)
- **20 mph top speed** (electric assist disengages above 20mph)
- Max power 750 watts (1 horsepower)
- Must have pedals and be pedal-assist (may have throttle)
- Need not be registered or insured



CAT-Coalition for Appropriate Transportation

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Bike-Walk-Bus-Trails in the Lehigh Valley

Classification of E-bikes by the Bike Biz

- Class 1: Pedal-assist/pedelec (motor kicks in while pedaling, no throttle), max speed of 20mph
- Class 2: Throttle-controlled, max speed of 20mph
- Class 3: Pedal-assist, max speed of 28mph (not permitted under PA law)
- Note: E-bike software modifications to increase speeds render them illegal and should be avoided.
- PA law effectively allows Classes 1 & 2 though it does not reference the classes.

“Bikes” with other types of motors under Pennsylvania Law

- Any bike with a gasoline-powered motor can be classified as a moped (<50cc, max 25mph, max 1.5 brake horsepower, automatic transmission) or motorcycle (>50cc) - both of which require vehicle registration and a driver’s license
- Electric “motor-driven cycles” (traditional scooters with a cushy seat and ~12” pneumatic tires) fall under the same requirements as mopeds
- Newer, urban-type electric scooters with small wheels - unclassified at this time, not permitted on public streets
- Electric motorcycles (high horsepower, no pedals)
- Roller skates, non-electric scooters, skateboards are classified as pedestrians in Pennsylvania.
- Motorized devices designed for use by persons with disabilities

More

- Off-road: Street legal e-bikes are now allowed by PA DCNR on state land, but laws may vary for locally-managed trails. CAT recommends riders to slow to 10mph or slower when passing pedestrians and slower-moving bicyclists.
- Pennsylvania Police Officers Crash Report Manual (PennDOT Pub 153, rev. 9-21) now tracks E-bikes as a “special-usage” vehicle type. *We are encouraging police departments to use this.*
- E-bike technology has been quickly advancing, and with the integration of batteries and motors lower on the frame, they are more balanced and smoother to ride.

Updated 2/20/2026

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