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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- REGULATION OF ELECTRIC BICYCLES

Introduced By: Senators Euer, and Kallman

Date Introduced: February 16, 2023

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 31 of the General Laws entitled "MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES"  
2 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 19.6

4 REGULATION OF ELECTRIC BICYCLES

5 **31-19.6-1. Regulation.**

6 Electric bicycles shall to be regulated like bicycles. The same rules of the road shall apply  
7 to both electric bicycles and human-powered bicycles pursuant to the provisions of chapter 19 of  
8 this title.

9 **31-19.6-2. Exemptions from regulation.**

10 An electric bicycle or a person operating an electric bicycle shall not be subject to the  
11 provisions of this title applicable to motor vehicles, including, but not limited to, registration,  
12 certificates of title, operators' licenses, financial responsibility, recreational vehicles, motor vehicle  
13 dealers, or commercial motor vehicles.

14 **31-19.6-3. Classes.**

15 There shall be three (3) classes of electric bicycles:

16 (1) Class 1: Bicycle equipped with an electric motor that provides assistance only when the  
17 rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty  
18 miles per hour (20 mph).

1 (2) Class 2: Bicycle equipped with a throttle-actuated electric motor that ceases to provide  
2 assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty miles per hour (20 mph).

3 (3) Class 3: Bicycle equipped with an electric motor that provides assistance only when the  
4 rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches twenty-  
5 eight miles per hour (28 mph).

6 **31-19.6-4. Helmets required - Age of operators.**

7 (a) Helmets, as defined in § 31-19-2.1, are required for riders fifteen (15) years of age or  
8 younger for all three (3) classes of electric bicycles and for all riders of Class 3 electric bicycles.

9 (b) Persons under sixteen (16) years of age shall not ride a Class 3 electric bicycle, unless  
10 as a passenger.

11 **31-19.6-5. Speedometer.**

12 All Class 3 electric bicycles shall be equipped with a speedometer that is capable of  
13 displaying the speed the electric bicycle is traveling in miles per hour.

14 **31-19.6-6. Municipal regulations.**

15 (a) Local governments shall not restrict the use of electric bicycles except to regulate the  
16 speed they may travel or in order to comply with other laws or legal obligations.

17 (b) A person shall not operate a Class 3 electric bicycle on a bicycle lane or multi-use path  
18 in excess of the posted or applicable speed limit, or if there is no posted or applicable speed limit,  
19 twenty miles per hour (20 mph).

20 **31-19.6-7. Labels on electronic bicycles.**

21 On or after January 1, 2024, manufacturers and distributors of electric bicycles shall apply  
22 a label that is permanently affixed, in a prominent location, to each electric bicycle. The label shall  
23 contain the classification number, top assisted speed, and motor wattage of the electric bicycle and  
24 shall be printed in Arial font in at least nine (9) point type.

25 **31-19.6-8. Consumer protection.**

26 An electric bicycle shall comply with the equipment and manufacturing requirements for  
27 bicycles adopted by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (16 C.F.R. Part 1512).

28 SECTION 2. Sections 31-1-3 and 31-1-23 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-1 entitled  
29 "Definitions and General Code Provisions" are hereby amended to read as follows:

30 **31-1-3. Types of vehicles.**

31 (a)(1) "Antique motor car" means any motor vehicle that is more than twenty-five (25)  
32 years old. Unless fully inspected and meeting inspection requirements, the vehicle may be  
33 maintained solely for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades, and other functions of public  
34 interest. The vehicle may also be used for limited enjoyment and purposes other than the previously

1 mentioned activities, but may not be used primarily for the transportation of passengers or goods  
2 over any public highway.

3 (2) After the vehicle has met the requirements of state inspection, a registration plate may  
4 be issued to it on payment of the standard fee. The vehicle may be operated on the highways of this  
5 and other states, and may, in addition to the registration plate, retain the designation "antique" and  
6 display an "antique plate."

7 (3) For any vehicle that is more than twenty-five (25) years old, the division of motor  
8 vehicles may also issue or approve, subject to rules and regulations that may be promulgated by  
9 the administrator, a "year of manufacture plate" for the vehicle that is an exact replica plate  
10 designating the exact year of manufacture of the vehicle. The year of manufacture plate, as  
11 authorized by this subsection, need only be attached to the rear of the vehicle.

12 (b)(1) "Antique motorcycle" means any motorcycle that is more than twenty-five (25) years  
13 old. Unless fully inspected and meeting inspection requirements, the vehicle shall be maintained  
14 solely for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades, and other functions of public interest. The  
15 vehicle may also be used for limited enjoyment and purposes other than the previously mentioned  
16 activities, but may not be used primarily for the transportation of passengers or goods over any  
17 public highway; and

18 (2) After the vehicle has met the requirements of state inspection, a registration plate may  
19 be issued to it, on payment of the standard fee, and the vehicle may be operated on the highways  
20 of this and other states, and may, in addition to the registration plate, retain the designation  
21 "antique" and display an "antique plate."

22 (c) "Authorized emergency vehicle" means vehicles of the fire department (fire patrol);  
23 police vehicles; vehicles of the department of corrections while in the performance of official  
24 duties; vehicles used by the state bomb squad within the office of state fire marshal; vehicles of  
25 municipal departments or public service corporations designated or authorized by the administrator  
26 as ambulances and emergency vehicles; and privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer  
27 firefighters or privately owned motor vehicles of volunteer ambulance drivers or attendants, as  
28 authorized by the department chief or commander and permitted by the Rhode Island Association  
29 of Fire Chiefs and Rhode Island Association of Police Chiefs Joint Committee for Volunteer  
30 Warning Light Permits.

31 (d) "Automobile" means, for registration purposes, every motor vehicle carrying  
32 passengers other than for hire.

33 (e) "Bicycle" means every vehicle having two (2) tandem wheels, except scooters and  
34 similar devices, propelled exclusively by human power, and upon which a person may ride.

1 (f) "Camping recreational vehicle" means a vehicular type camping unit, certified by the  
2 manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.2 Standards, designed primarily as temporary living  
3 quarters for recreation that has either its own motor power or is mounted on, or towed by, another  
4 vehicle. The basic units are tent trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, motorized campers, travel trailers, and  
5 pick-up campers.

6 (g) "Electric motorized bicycle" means a motorized bicycle, also called an "electric  
7 bicycle", as defined in § 31-19.6-3, that may be propelled by human power or electric motor power,  
8 or by both, with an electric motor rated not more than two (2) (S.A.E.) horsepower, that is capable  
9 of a maximum speed of not more than ~~twenty-five (25)~~ twenty-eight (28) miles per hour.

10 (h) "Electric personal assistive mobility device" ("EPAMD") is a self-balancing, non-  
11 tandem two-wheeled (2) device, designed to transport only one person, with an electric propulsion  
12 system that limits the maximum speed of the device to fifteen (15) miles per hour.

13 (i) "Fifth-wheel trailer": A towable recreational vehicle, not exceeding four hundred (400)  
14 square feet in area, designed to be towed by a motorized vehicle that contains a towing mechanism  
15 that is mounted above or forward of the tow vehicle's rear axle and that is eligible to be registered  
16 for highway use.

17 (j) "Hearse" means every motor vehicle used for transporting human corpses. A hearse  
18 shall be considered an automobile for registration purposes.

19 (k) "Jitney or bus" means: (1) A "public bus" that includes every motor vehicle, trailer,  
20 semi-trailer, tractor trailer, or tractor trailer combination, used for the transportation of passengers  
21 for hire, and operated wholly or in part upon any street or highway as a means of transportation  
22 similar to that afforded by a street railway company, by indiscriminately receiving or discharging  
23 passengers, or running on a regular route or over any portion of one, or between fixed termini; or  
24 (2) A "private bus" that includes every motor vehicle other than a public bus or passenger van  
25 designed for carrying more than ten (10) passengers and used for the transportation of persons, and  
26 every motor vehicle other than a taxicab designed and used for the transportation of persons for  
27 compensation.

28 (l) "Motorcycle" means only those motor vehicles having not more than three (3) wheels  
29 in contact with the ground and a saddle on which the driver sits astride, except bicycles with helper  
30 motors as defined in subsection (n) of this section.

31 (m) "Motor-driven cycle" means every motorcycle, including every motor scooter, with a  
32 motor of no greater than five (5) horsepower, except bicycles with helper motors as defined in  
33 subsection (n) of this section.

34 (n) "Motorized bicycles" means two-wheel (2) vehicles that may be propelled by human

1 power or helper power, or by both, with a motor rated not more than four and nine-tenths (4.9)  
2 horsepower and not greater than fifty (50) cubic centimeters, that are capable of a maximum speed  
3 of not more than thirty (30) miles per hour.

4 (o) "Motorized camper": A camping recreational vehicle, built on, or permanently attached  
5 to, a self-propelled motor vehicle chassis cab or van that is an integral part of the completed vehicle.

6 (p) "Motorized tricycles" means tricycles that may be propelled by human power or helper  
7 motor, or by both, with a motor rated no more than 1.5 brake horsepower that is capable of a  
8 maximum speed of not more than thirty (30) miles per hour.

9 (q) "Motorized wheelchair" means any self-propelled vehicle, designed for, and used by, a  
10 person with a disability that is incapable of speed in excess of eight (8) miles per hour.

11 (r) "Motor scooter" means a motor-driven cycle with a motor rated not more than four and  
12 nine-tenths (4.9) horsepower and not greater than fifty (50) cubic centimeters that is capable of a  
13 maximum speed of not more than thirty (30) miles per hour.

14 (s) "Motor vehicle" means every vehicle that is self-propelled or propelled by electric  
15 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated upon rails, except vehicles moved  
16 exclusively by human power, an EPAMD and electric motorized bicycles as defined in subsection  
17 (g) of this section, and motorized wheelchairs.

18 (t) "Motor vehicle for hire" means every motor vehicle other than jitneys, public buses,  
19 hearses, and motor vehicles used chiefly in connection with the conduct of funerals, to transport  
20 persons for compensation in any form, or motor vehicles rented for transporting persons either with  
21 or without furnishing an operator.

22 (u) "Natural gas vehicle" means a vehicle operated by an engine fueled primarily by natural  
23 gas.

24 (v) "Park trailer": A camping recreational vehicle that is eligible to be registered for  
25 highway use and meets the following criteria: (1) Built on a single chassis mounted on wheels; and  
26 (2) Certified by the manufacturer as complying with ANSI A119.5.

27 (w) "Passenger van" means every motor vehicle capable of carrying ten (10) to fourteen  
28 (14) passengers plus an operator and used for personal use or on a not-for-hire basis. Passenger  
29 vans may be used for vanpools, transporting passengers to and from work locations, provided that  
30 the operator receives no remuneration other than free use of the vehicle.

31 (x) "Pedal carriage" (also known as "quadricycles") means a nonmotorized bicycle with  
32 four (4) or more wheels operated by one or more persons for the purpose of, or capable of,  
33 transporting additional passengers in seats or on a platform made a part of or otherwise attached to  
34 the pedal carriage. The term shall not include a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed to

1 it, nor shall it include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the  
2 transportation of a person with a disability, nor shall it include a tricycle built for a child or an adult  
3 with a seat for only one operator and no passenger.

4 (y) "Pick-up camper": A camping recreational vehicle consisting of a roof, floor, and sides  
5 designed to be loaded onto and unloaded from the back of a pick-up truck.

6 (z) "Rickshaw" (also known as "pedi cab") means a nonmotorized bicycle with three (3)  
7 wheels operated by one person for the purpose of, or capable of, transporting additional passengers  
8 in seats or on a platform made a part of, or otherwise attached to, the rickshaw. This definition shall  
9 not include a bicycle built for two (2) where the operators are seated one behind the other, nor shall  
10 it include the operation of a bicycle with trainer or beginner wheels affixed thereto, nor shall it  
11 include a wheelchair or other vehicle with the purpose of operation by or for the transportation of  
12 a person with a disability.

13 (aa) "School bus" means every motor vehicle owned by a public or governmental agency,  
14 when operated for the transportation of children to or from school; or privately owned, when  
15 operated for compensation for the transportation of children to or from school.

16 (bb) "Suburban vehicle" means every motor vehicle with a convertible or interchangeable  
17 body or with removable seats, usable for both passenger and delivery purposes, and including motor  
18 vehicles commonly known as station or depot wagons or any vehicle into which access can be  
19 gained through the rear by means of a hatch or trunk and where the rear seats can be folded down  
20 to permit the carrying of articles as well as passengers.

21 (cc) "Tent trailer": A towable recreational vehicle that is mounted on wheels and  
22 constructed with collapsible partial side walls that fold for towing by another vehicle and unfold  
23 for use and that is eligible to be registered for highway use.

24 (dd) "Trackless trolley coach" means every motor vehicle that is propelled by electric  
25 power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated on rails.

26 (ee) "Travel trailer": A towable recreational vehicle, not exceeding three hundred twenty  
27 square feet (320 sq. ft.) in area, designed to be towed by a motorized vehicle containing a towing  
28 mechanism that is mounted behind the tow vehicle's bumper and that is eligible to be registered for  
29 highway use.

30 (ff) "Vehicle" means every device in, upon, or by which any person or property is or may  
31 be transported or drawn upon a highway, except devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or  
32 tracks.

33 **31-1-23. Types of roads.**

34 (a) "Bicycle lane" means a portion of highway right-of-way designated by the state and

1 identified by official traffic control devices (pavement markings) for the exclusive use of bicyclists.  
2 The operation and parking of motor vehicles is prohibited within the lane identified for exclusive  
3 use by bicyclists, except when making a turn, entering or leaving the roadway or a parking lane, or  
4 when required in the course of official duty.

5 (b) “Bicycle route” means a shared right-of-way along a highway, designated by the state  
6 and identified by official traffic control devices (signs) for use by bicyclists.

7 (c) “Bicycle trail or path” means a bikeway physically separated from motorized vehicular  
8 traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within an  
9 independent right-of-way. Bicycle trails or paths may ~~also~~ be used by [bicycles, including electric](#)  
10 [bicycles](#), pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers and other nonmotorized users.

11 (d) “Laned roadway” means a roadway which is divided into two (2) or more clearly  
12 marked lanes for vehicular traffic.

13 (e) “Limited access highway” means every highway, street, or roadway to or from which  
14 owners or occupants of abutting lands and other persons have no legal right of access except at  
15 those points and in that manner determined by the public authority having jurisdiction over it.

16 (f) “Local highway” means every street or highway other than a state highway, private  
17 road, or driveway.

18 (g) “Private road or driveway” means every way or place in private ownership that is used  
19 for vehicular travel only by the owner and by those others having express or implied permission  
20 from the owner.

21 (h) “Roadway” means that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for  
22 vehicular travel, excluding the sidewalk, berm, or shoulder even when used by persons riding  
23 bicycles. In the event a highway includes two (2) or more separate roadways, “roadway” refers to  
24 the roadway separately and not the roadways collectively.

25 (i) “Sidewalk” means that portion of a street between the curb lines, or the lateral lines of  
26 a roadway, and the adjacent property lines intended for the use of pedestrians.

27 (j) “State highway” means every street or highway constructed and/or maintained by the  
28 director of public works and the division of roads and bridges.

29 (k) “Street or highway” means the entire width between boundary lines of every way when  
30 any part of it is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular traffic.

31 (l) “Through highway” means every highway or portion of a highway having entrances  
32 from intersecting highways at which vehicular traffic is required by law to stop before entering or  
33 crossing, and where stop signs are erected under the provisions of chapters 1 — 27 of this title.

1 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2024.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- REGULATION OF ELECTRIC  
BICYCLES

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1           This act would regulate electric bicycles in the same manner as human-powered bicycles,  
2   classify electric bicycles into three (3) classes and require all electric bicycles to have a technical  
3   information label affixed to the bicycle. The act also would require that electric bicycles be  
4   equipped with a speedometer and would restrict electric bicycles to be capable of a maximum speed  
5   of twenty-eight (28) miles per hour. It would also allow the use of electric bicycles on bicycle trails  
6   and paths.

7           This act would take effect on January 1, 2024.

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