

**OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN, BREADON, CULPEPPER, FITZGERALD,
MURPHY, WEBER, AND WORRELL**



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

**ORDINANCE REGULATING ALL E-BIKES IN THE
CITY OF BOSTON**

WHEREAS, According to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 85, Section 11B, bicyclists may use most public roads and must follow the same traffic laws as motor vehicles, except on limited-access or express highways where bicycles are specifically prohibited. Riders shall keep to the right when passing vehicles, use hand signals when safe to do so, and ride on sidewalks outside of business districts if necessary for safety, unless local rules say otherwise. When riding on a sidewalk, bicyclists must yield to pedestrians and give an audible warning before passing; *and*

WHEREAS, Additionally, according to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 90, Section 1, an electric bicycle as a bicycle or tricycle with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of 750 watts or less, limited to Class 1 or Class 2 electric bicycles, and distinguishes Class 1 electric bicycles as providing pedal-assist only up to 20 miles per hour and Class 2 electric bicycles as capable of motor-only propulsion but not exceeding 20 miles per hour, while expressly excluding electric bicycles from the definition of motorized bicycles, which are separately defined by engine capacity, transmission type, and maximum speed; *and*

WHEREAS, Neighbors and pedestrians throughout the City of Boston - including our seniors, persons with disabilities, and young families - consistently bring up the lack of enforcement on all two-wheeled vehicles operating on sidewalks, running red lights and stop signs, and going the wrong way down the street. They consistently report feeling unsafe walking on sidewalks and streets near these two-wheel devices, due to the high rates of speed and skill required; *and*

WHEREAS, Locally, we have seen cycling-related collisions and crashes increase, including many incidents that go undocumented due to a lack of registration requirements for bicycles, electric and motorized bicycles and scooters. Across the state, local media and police departments have highlighted safety concerns and warned about dangerous driving with children as young as 12 on e-bikes, due to the current lack of safety regulations in Massachusetts. In August, a man hit by an e-bike in the crosswalk on Boylston Street tragically passed weeks later after sustaining life threatening injuries. This followed the tragic death of a 13-year-old, when an e-bike collided with a vehicle in Stoneham; *and*

WHEREAS, Medical professionals at Massachusetts General Hospital highlighted in a November 2025 Boston Globe opinion article that state law is limited in its regulation of e-bikes, due to the lack of age restrictions, helmet enforcement, and licensing requirements. They highlight a recent study by the American Public Health Association that found a 293% increase in e-bike injuries and an 88% rise in powered scooter injuries between 2019 and 2023. According to a recent study, e-bike riders are about 57% more likely to get into an accident than traditional bike riders; *and*

WHEREAS, In August 2025, it was reported that more than 100 people on bicycles, scooters, and dirt bikes rode recklessly over the Zakim Bridge. One man was arrested after crashing his dirt bike into a Boston Police cruiser, charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest; *and*

WHEREAS, This ordinance will provide clarity and consistency on the regulation of e-bikes, including Class 3 e-bikes, which are currently classified as mopeds in the City of Boston. It is critical that there are strict regulations and enforcement measures to protect operators and pedestrians, and also prevent further tragedies; ***NOW, THEREFORE***

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston as follows:

Section 1.

The City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter 16 is hereby amended by inserting the following new section after Chapter 16-12.38A:

CHAPTER 16

ORDINANCE 16-12.38B

ELECTRIC BIKE RULES AND REGULATIONS

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston, as follows:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish uniform rules governing the use and regulation of electric bicycles within the City of Boston; to promote public safety; and to ensure consistency with the applicable laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this ordinance, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

(a) Electric Bicycle. A bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts.

(b) Class 1 Electric Bicycle. An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of twenty (20) miles per hour.

(c) Class 2 Electric Bicycle. An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of twenty (20) miles per hour.

(d) Class 3 Electric Bicycle.

or

(1) Electric bicycles capable of achieving twenty-eight (28) miles per hour under pedal assist but less than thirty (30) miles per hour maximum capability

(2) An electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of twenty-eight (28) miles per hour;

(3) Any electric bicycle capable of attaining a “high-speed” of thirty (30) miles per hour or greater by means of motor assistance or pedal-assist.

(e) Public Way. Any street, road, lane, or path maintained by the City of Boston and open for public travel.

SECTION 3. OPERATION OF CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2 ELECTRIC BICYCLES

(a) Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles may be operated:

(1) In bicycle lanes;

(2) On multi-use paths, except where otherwise posted; and

(3) On public ways where bicycles are lawfully permitted.

(b) Operators of Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles shall have all rights and duties applicable to operators of traditional bicycles.

(c) Class 1 and Class 2 electric bicycles shall not exceed twenty (20) miles per hour under motor assistance.

SECTION 4. REGULATION OF CLASS 3 ELECTRIC BICYCLES

(a) Such bicycles shall be prohibited from:

(1) Operating in a bicycle lane, on a sidewalk, or on a multi-use recreational path unless expressly permitted by posted signage.

(b) Operators shall wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet at all times.

SECTION 5. REGULATION OF HIGH-SPEED ELECTRIC BICYCLES (30 MPH OR GREATER)

(a) Any electric bicycle with a maximum motor-assisted or motor-powered speed of thirty (30) miles per hour or greater shall be prohibited from:

(1) Operating in a bicycle lane, on a sidewalk, or on a multi-use recreational path unless expressly permitted by posted signage.

(2) Operation for people under 16 years old;

(b) Operators shall:

(1) Operate only on public ways where mopeds or motorcycles are lawfully permitted;

(2) Be required to wear properly fitted bicycle helmets at all times

(3) Be registered with the Registry of Motor Vehicles in the appropriate vehicle classification;

(4) Be operated only by a person holding a valid driver’s license or learner’s permit; and

- (5) Comply with all equipment, lighting, signaling, and traffic requirements applicable to mopeds or motorcycles.
- (6) Have clearly labeled speed capacities and age recommendations provided by the manufacturer, and face penalties for selling vehicles that violate existing law.
- (c) It shall be unlawful for any person to mislabel, conceal, alter, or modify an electric bicycle in a manner intended to evade the provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 6. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

In addition to the prohibitions described, no person shall operate any electric bicycle at a speed exceeding the posted speed limit for the roadway, path, or facility on which it is operated. Operators shall follow all traffic laws and regulations, including stopping at stop signs and following all traffic lights, unless signs are posted otherwise.

(a) Violations of this Ordinance shall be subject to the following civil penalties: (1) For Class 1 or Class 2 violations: a fine not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100) per offense.

(2) For Class 3 or high-speed electric bicycle violations: a fine not to exceed two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) per offense.

(b) Any electric bicycle operated in violation of this ordinance and not registered as required under state law may be subject to impoundment by the Boston Police Department or the Boston Transportation Department.

SECTION 7. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

The provisions of this ordinance are severable and if any provision, or portion thereof, should be held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance shall take effect thirty (30) days following its passage and approval.

Filed on: February 9, 2026