

Frequently Asked Questions

E-bikes on Three Rivers Trails



In 2021, the Minnesota Legislature updated regulations around electric-assisted bicycles (e-bikes) to treat e-bikes the same as conventional bicycles. Since then, there has been much public confusion around the where, who and how e-bikes can be used. Updated state statutes clarify definitions of e-bikes and where they may be ridden. Based on these new laws, below are answers to common questions around e-bikes and their use.

What is an e-bike?

An electric assisted bicycle (e-bike) is defined as a bicycle with two or three wheels that has a saddle, fully operational pedals for human propulsion, a motor that has an output of not more than 750 watts, and meets the requirements of a Class 1, Class 2 or Class 3 definition of an e-bike.

Class 1	Motor assists up to 20 mph while pedaling (no throttle)
Class 2	Motor assists up to 20 mph with or without rider pedaling (throttle)
Class 3	Motor assists up to 28 mph only when rider is pedaling (no throttle)*

**Class 3 e-bikes with throttles do exist, but they are technically an illegal class in Minnesota*

What is not an e-bike?

A motorized bicycle that does not meet the definition of an electric-assisted bicycle. Anything outside of these classification definitions (class 1, 2 or 3) is considered a motorized bicycle, moped, or motorcycle depending on the type of device.

Is there an age restriction for operating an e-bike?

Yes — state statutes prohibit anyone under 15 years of age from operating e-bikes.

Do you need a license to operate an e-bike?

No — a driver's license is not required to operate an e-bike.

Where can e-bikes be ridden?

E-bikes are given the same rights as regular bicycles. Therefore, they are allowed to operate (generally) anywhere bicycles are allowed. This includes most multi-use trails, bike lanes or shoulders of roadways. Regardless of whether they are operating an e-bike or a regular bicycle, users must follow traffic laws when operating on roadways and local rules/ordinances when operating on trails.

Are there statutes around operations of an e-bike on multi-use trails (example – the Lake Minnetonka or Dakota Rail Regional Trail)?

Yes – all bicycles (including e-bikes) must give an audible signal a safe distance prior to overtaking another bicycle or pedestrian. A safe clearance distance is required when passing as well.

Where can I find state laws around e-bikes?

Most laws around bicycles (and e-bikes) can be found in Minnesota State Statute 169.222 “Operation of a Bicycle” and 169.011 “Definitions.”

What about electric foot scooters? Are they allowed on trails?

Yes – electric foot scooters are granted the same rights and responsibilities as bicycles. No person under age 12 may operate electric foot scooters and minors between the ages of 12 and 18 are required to wear a helmet (Minnesota State Statute 169.225).

What are the rules on regional trails?

When bicycling on multi-use trails, Three Rivers Park District ordinance 396, chapter 6-7 states: “It shall be unlawful for any person to: (d) Ride or operate a bicycle except in a prudent and careful manner, or at a speed faster than is reasonable and safe with regard to the safety of the operator and other persons in the immediate area.”

All trail users have a responsibility to share the trail and ride, walk, run or roll in a respectful and safe manner.