

## Insurance Federation of Pennsylvania

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To: The Honorable Members of the House Transportation Committee

From: Samuel R. Marshall, Jonathan C. Greer and Noah K. Karn

**Re: House Bill 2646- electric-assist bikes, and how best to regulate them**

This is different from yesterday's hearing. That dealt with a new technology – Personal Delivery Devices – whereas this is for an expanded use of an existing technology, electric-assisted bikes. Still, the core goal is the same: How to make sure these can be safely included in the existing infrastructure of roads, paths and sidewalks, and integrated with the pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers already that infrastructure.

This again means a balance – how to expand the use and types of bikes, and to do it safely on an existing (and crowded) infrastructure.

We understand these bikes are mainly used to let more people use bikes in a recreational way than as a business use or a matter of “micro-mobility,” the buzzword around the very different form of rental e-scooters this committee has heard about. In that sense, these e-assisted bikes are more a niche product to enhance existing biking use than a whole new option of commuting and delivering goods.

We have some questions with the bill and what it intends for the use of these electric-assisted bikes:

- Why the change from current law? Is the primary goal for more speed – going from 25 to 28 mph? Or is it to allow a new type of bike that doesn't need to be pedaled but can still go 20 mph? Or is it to allow, absent a locality's override, these bikes on bike paths across the Commonwealth? Is the anticipation that this will greatly increase the number of these bikes or the ways they are used?

The three classes match the current federal standard and current technology of e-assisted bikes. Great, but what happens when you adopt these new standards – what changes in terms of how and where these bikes can be used. The bill refers only to bike paths – but you also need to consider the use of these bikes on roads, bike lanes and sidewalks.

- As those of us who bike know, 20 mph is about 50% faster than a good bicyclist's pace; 28 mph is faster than the Tour de France average. So these e-assisted bikes will be going at much faster speeds than conventional bikes, and with less human engagement.

Maybe that's not a problem for some areas – it depends on the local infrastructure. You need to make sure, though, that a locality has the ability – and affirmative responsibility – to make sure these new types of bikes can be safely used at these speeds in a given community and on the various available infrastructures.

These bikes may prove popular, for commuting as well as recreation. But they really are much different than conventional bikes, if only based on speed. So a locality should evaluate its bike lane capacity, its roads and its sidewalks before allowing these “super bikes.”

- The proposed Class 2 for pedalcycles is concerning, because it goes from an e-assisted to an e-powered bike. That seems more a moped than a bike. We're not sure it makes sense to create this category without any age or licensing restrictions, as applied to mopeds.
- Is this envisioned to become the “new norm” in bikes used for commuting or food delivery bikes. Can existing bike lanes, generally used by much slower bikes, accommodate them, or will they be more likely used on roads? Those are questions not only for the proponents of these new and expanded classes of e-bikes, but for the localities that have to merge them into their existing infrastructures.
- The bill goes into bike paths – the trails as opposed to bike lanes that are an enormously successful recycling of abandoned train lines. We appreciate the Rails to Trails Conservancy's position that e-assisted bikes

may be properly used on these trails and its recommendation that state and local authorities should control the parameters to ensure safety.

Speaking as a bicyclist as much as an insurance person, we agree, but with heavy emphasis on the need for localities to control this – they are in the best position to know the use of their paths. So we think that section should have localities making the affirmative call, and being able to not only prohibit but otherwise regulate or limit various types of e-bikes.

We appreciate Rep. Wentling's commitment to safely bringing the enjoyment of biking and of Pennsylvania's bike trails to more people through e-assisted bikes. We look forward to working with all interested parties in making sure this bill achieves his goal of safe expansion through e-assisted bikes, not only for bike paths but for roads and bike lanes, and for not only recreational use, but for expanded commuting options and even commercial use.