

*Testimony on HB 250, House Transportation Committee, Oct. 25,
2017*

My name is Phillip Obermiller. I'm a lifelong resident of Ohio now living in Cincinnati. I appreciate having this opportunity to testify as an e-Bike owner.

Bicycling has been my main form of recreation for years. I rode my last two standard bikes some 2,800 miles, often pedaling in fundraisers for various charities.

Now that my childhood polio is reemerging, I have switched to an e-Bike in order to keep riding. With a pedelec I can still enjoy biking with a purpose - most recently I rode in a fundraiser for the Ohio-to-Erie Trail.

On that ride I was approached by a half-dozen fellow cyclists with questions about my e-Bike. In each case it was a man who felt it necessary to explain "I'm thinking about getting one for my wife." Maybe they

were, or perhaps they were looking at their own future.

My wife is a cancer survivor who also rides an e-Bike. She and I drive to different trailheads where our rides are often combined with meals and an overnight stay. Without our e-bikes we couldn't promote local commerce in this way.

I have logged 1,800 mostly trail miles on my e-Bike without causing harm or hazard to anyone. I pass my share of slower traffic, and am regularly passed by standard bikes traveling at much higher speeds. For me, it's not a race, it's a ride to be enjoyed.

I have to pedal my bike in order to get any assist; no effort on my part means no help from the bike. Mine is a Class II bike, however, so it has a throttle, an important safety feature for me. Trails often cross roads with blind spots for both cars and cyclists. The throttle helps me get moving from a dead stop and to clear intersections safely.

There is a stigma attached to e-bikes that I hope none of you share, and that HB 250 can help diminish. Sometimes pedelec riders are considered either lazy or thought of as “cheaters”, often by folks in the prime of life and in good health. This was brought home to me as I was loading my bike at a trailhead one day when another cyclist came over and asked me if that was an electric bike. When I said “Yes” he spat out a single word, “Cheater!”, turned on his heel and walked away. His evident self-righteousness was accompanied by no sense of irony as he loaded his bike into an up-scale mini-van with an electric starter, automatic transmission, power steering, and power brakes.

As I have noted, I mainly use my e-bike on trails, bike paths, and dedicated bike lanes. Passing “No Motorized Vehicle” signs along the way reminds me that much of the Ohio Revised Code pertaining to bicycles was written in the 1990s, well before many trails were established or many e-bikes were sold. It

is time to update the Code. The bicycle industry is on board with this, as are many bicycle retailers, and riders like me. No public revenues will be encumbered by these changes, but a growing segment of Ohio's bicycling public will appreciate them.

Thank you.

Reading time: 3 min. , 2 sec.