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# Mayor de Blasio Announces New Framework to Clarify Legality of Pedal-Assist Bicycles

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***A new DOT rule will define and regulate pedal-assist bicycles for use on New York City streets***

**NEW YORK**— Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced that DOT will begin the rule-making process to clarify that pedal-assist bicycles are legal to operate in New York City. The new rule will recognize that pedal-assist bicycles are permissible, whereas throttle e-bikes, capable of travel at speeds over 20 MPH, cannot be legally operated on City streets under State law.

“As cycling continues to grow in popularity for commuting, deliveries and tourism, we are seeing the demand for pedal-assist bicycles that can help cyclists travel longer distances and more easily climb steep hills,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “With new and clear guidelines, cyclists, delivery workers and businesses alike will now understand exactly what devices are allowed.”

“By creating the framework for pedal-assist bicycles, our goal is to join other world cities that are opening the door for delivery workers, older or less able-bodied cyclists, and other casual aspiring cyclists to experience a safe and low-emission mode of travel,” said **DOT Commissioner Trottenberg**. “Cycling, including on pedal-assist bikes, is not only fun, it’s a fast, affordable, healthy and sustainable way of getting around. With challenges like the L train tunnel closure on the horizon, our aim is to balance moving even more New Yorkers on two wheels with the need to manage that growth safely.”

“The NYPD supports the clarification of the legal status of electric bicycles being operated on New York City streets,” said **Chief Thomas Chan, the NYPD’s Chief of Transportation**. “The NYPD will continue to work closely with the Department of Transportation to ensure the safety of the city’s bicyclists.”

The City outlined the following benefits to its new legal framework and the expansion of pedal-assist bicycles:

**Increased Cycling Options for Delivery Workers and Commuters:** The new rule will also help meet the City’s goals of doubling the number of active cyclists by 2020. In addition to creating more ways to get around in neighborhoods and areas underserved by transit, the rule will be helpful for those considering new commuting options during the closure of the L train tunnel starting in April 2019. The Williamsburg Bridge currently has over 7,000 daily bicycling trips; during the tunnel

closure, cycling trips over the bridge are expected to more than double.

**Health and Sustainability:** Pedal-assist bicycles contain a rechargeable battery that can be used to travel longer distances or boost power going up hills -- and are among the fastest-growing and most environmentally sound modes of urban travel, both around the U.S. and around the world. One European study has shown substantial health and environmental benefits, including that pedal-assist bicycles increase cycling, especially among older users. Research has also shown that pedal-assist bicycle trips most often replace car trips; with the ability to avoid car traffic and parking costs, trips on pedal-assist bicycles are usually both faster and cheaper.

In October 2017, Mayor de Blasio and the NYPD announced increased enforcement against improper use of electric bikes, with a particular focus on the hazardous operation of e-bikes and businesses that use them or permit employees to ride them. Under the framework announced today, DOT and NYPD will sanction low-speed pedal-assist bicycles that operate with the assistance of human power, specifying the exact type of permissible equipment. E-bikes possessing throttle capacity or any capacity to operate without human power remain illegal under State and local law. Several bills addressing e-bikes are active in Albany, and New York City would also be open to further clarification.

Under the new rule, cyclists as well as delivery workers who currently do not travel by bike will have an alternative that is legal, sustainable (zero-emission) and safe. Throughout the rulemaking and implementation process, the Administration will continue to work with and hear from a variety of stakeholders, including immigrant and delivery worker advocates.

“Expanding and promoting the technology that underpins pedal-assist bicycles is an exciting part of our city’s ongoing transition to safer, lower emission, electrified vehicles,” said **Mark Chambers, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability**.

“I thank Mayor de Blasio for clarifying the legality of pedal-assist bicycles in New York City, a safe and eco-friendly mode of transportation that has been particularly useful for immigrant workers and seniors in the five boroughs. We must advance safe, shared uses of our streets, and pedal-assist bicycles are certainly part of that roadscape in Brooklyn,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**.

“I applaud the city and the community of bicycle workers and advocates for designing a sensible step forward. This new rule for pedal-assist bicycles protects our local (mostly immigrant) workers and builds on a framework that commits to safe streets for everyone. Our delivery workers are on the job long hours and can now legally use technology on their bicycles to assist them while keeping speeds low. What made today possible was the strong voice of the community who came out and demanded action; we must keep coming back to the table to build on that momentum as we create a larger package of reform in the State,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the Committee on Immigration**.

“We must always remember that the most deeply impacted by any decision on this issue will be

hard-working, low-income newly immigrated individuals who may become vulnerable to deportation while struggling to provide for their families," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Council Committee on Transportation**. "This is a step in the right direction in looking for a compromise that will keep pedestrians and other cyclists safe, and delivery workers able to earn a living. We must continue to work closely with the advocacy groups on the ground and our legislative colleagues in Albany for a lasting solution."

"I am glad the Mayor has heard our concerns and is taking this positive step forward," said **Council Member Rafael Espinal, Chair of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing**. "This is a big win for the e-bike community, especially delivery workers, who rely on e-bikes to make a living. There is still more work to be done in Albany to ensure the laws are clearly defined to protect all e-vehicle riders and in the city to support those who want to transition from throttle e-bikes to pedal assist bicycles."

"Clear laws are stronger laws. This clarification on pedal-assist bikes provides casual bikers and delivery workers alike with needed reassurance that they are not breaking the law. Pedal-assist bikes are another speedy, sustainable, and healthy way for New Yorkers to get around when diverse transit options are increasingly in demand. But at the same time, we must renew our commitment to both protecting pedestrian safety as more and more cyclists hit the streets, and enforcing the laws restricting e-bikes in a fair and thorough manner," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"Pedal-assist bicycles are not only fun, affordable and healthy, they are environmentally friendly and help ease congestion and pollution in our streets. Thank you to City Hall for drafting these new rules as they will also help differentiate between a safe way to get around the city and other forms of motorized bicycles that can be very hazardous," said **Senator Marisol Alcántara**.

"We thank Mayor de Blasio for establishing this new rule clarifying that Class 1 pedal assist E-bikes are legal to use in NYC," said **Paul Winkeller, Executive Director of the statewide New York Bicycling Coalition**. "This framework expands opportunities for bicycling to New Yorkers who could sometimes use an extra boost. We would welcome additional clarity from the State so that NY residents from Long Island to Buffalo, and Tarrytown to Plattsburgh, are not left behind!"

**Asian American Federation, Biking Public Project, The Legal Aid Society, Make the Road New York and Transportation Alternatives** said: "We welcome the Mayor's announcement today to clarify the legality of pedal-assist bikes. This is an important and positive first step in responding to an explosion in demand for food delivery supported by thousands of low-wage immigrant workers who deliver more than 100,000 meals in New York City each day. Although many questions remain to make sure workers will be able to comply with this clarification, we are committed to working with City Hall and the Council to ensure that workers are not left behind throughout this process."

For more information on e-bikes and enforcement, please visit:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/bicyclists/commercial-cyclists.shtml>

**[pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov)**

*(212) 788-2958*