



## **CITY OF KIRKLAND**

### **Police Department**

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**[www.kirklandwa.gov](http://www.kirklandwa.gov)**

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Transportation Commission

**From:** Lieutenant Clayton Slominski, Investigations Division

**Date:** November 19, 2025

**Subject:** Raising Public Awareness on E-Cycle Safety

### **Staff Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Transportation Commission receive a presentation on the City's recent e-bike and e-cycle outreach efforts.

### **Background**

Kirkland has seen an increase in the use of electric motorcycles and electric dirt bikes (e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes), particularly among youth under the age of 16. These vehicles are often marketed and sold online as "e-bikes," but they do not fall within any of the state's adopted e-bike classifications. To legally be considered an e-bike, it must have operable pedals, motors not exceeding 750 watts, and maximum assisted speeds of 20–28 mph. Unlike legal e-bikes, e-motorcycles and e-dirt bikes have higher-powered motors, lack pedals, and can sustain speeds well above 28 mph.

City staff have launched a coordinated outreach effort to increase community awareness about e-cycle safety. Staff published a dedicated webpage on [kirklandwa.gov](http://kirklandwa.gov) that offers clear guidance on the different types of e-cycles and the rules that apply to each. This information has also been adapted and shared across multiple channels, including social media, the This Week in Kirkland newsletter, and the inaugural issue of The Kirklander. While a planned media event in September did not attract media coverage due to competing national news, staff are coordinating with regional agency partners to reschedule the event in the coming weeks to further amplify safety messaging.

### **Discussion**

Under Washington State law, there are clear differences between e-bikes, traditional electric motorcycles, and e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes.

Under RCW 46.04.169, e-bikes are bicycles that are assisted by an electric motor and are categorized into three classes of e-bikes. A class 1 e-bike requires pedal assistance to reach 20


mph and is allowed in most places a non-motorized bike is allowed. A class 2 e-bike can use throttle-assistance to reach up to 20 mph and is allowed in most places a non-motorized bike is allowed. A class 3 e-bike requires pedal assistance to reach up to 28 mph and is generally allowed only on roads and bike lanes or sidewalks if no safe alternative is available. With every classification, a legal e-bike will always have functional pedals capable of propelling the bike and a maximum assisted speed of 20mph (when using only electric power) or 28 mph (with the rider pedaling). The power output from an e-bike motor will never exceed 750 watts.

RCW 46.04.330 provides the definition for a motorcycle. In short, "motorcycle" means a motor vehicle designed to travel on two to three wheels, on which the driver rides on a seat and steers the vehicle with a handlebar. "Motorcycle" excludes a motorized foot scooter, an electric assisted bicycle, and a moped. Much like electric cars, motorcycle manufacturers have evolved their product lines to include alternatives to gas-powered vehicles. Traditional motorcycles that use only electric power and are sold under the brands of Harley Davidson or Kawasaki, for example, can be purchased at dealerships and specialty stores. These vehicles require registration, a license plate, and a license with a motorcycle endorsement to operate.

Falling somewhere between the legal e-bikes and motorcycles are the e-motorcycles and e-dirt bikes that are the primary subject of complaints in Kirkland. These e-motorcycles and e-dirt bikes are powered solely by an electric motor with a power output that exceeds 750 watts. These vehicles often have foot pegs or brackets instead of operable pedals. E-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes continue to power the vehicle after it has reached 28 mph, which distinguishes them from e-bikes.

Today, e-motorcycles and e-dirt bikes are widely available for purchase and are often labeled as 'e-bikes.' Consumers are not aware that the item they are purchasing is, in fact, an e-motorcycle, and different rules apply in order for it to legally operate on the public right-of-way. City staff have been running a public information campaign about the difference between an e-bike and an e-motorcycle/e-dirt bike, but more needs to be done.

Currently, when feasible, Kirkland Police Department (KPD) officers will attempt to contact youth riding e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes. KPD will call the rider's parent(s) or guardian to pick up the youth and their vehicle. Officers will then remind the parents and the child of the dangers of these types of vehicles and inform parents of the regulations around their use. While Officers are encouraged to take an educational approach first, they still have discretion to impound the e-cycle and potentially issue a criminal citation when the violations justify this action.



Type of Cycle	Max Assisted Speed	Has Throttle	Operable Pedals	Age restriction
Class 1 e-bike	20 mph	✗	✓	None
Class 2 e-bike	20 mph	✓	✓	None
Class 3 e-bike	28 mph	✗**	✓	16+
e-motorcycle*	>28 mph	✓	Varies	16+ and have valid WA license with motorcycle endorsement to ride on roadway

\* Unlicensed and unregistered e-motorcycles may include e-dirt bikes and must follow the rules outlined for off-road recreation vehicles.

\*\* Some class 3 e-bikes have a throttle, while most do not.

**Next Steps**

Staff will continue implementing outreach efforts to educate the community about e-cycle safety, including ongoing updates to the City's communication channels and rescheduled media engagement with regional partners. Staff will also work with the Lake Washington School District to expand outreach into middle schools and high schools, where many youth riders and their families are making decisions about e-cycle use. Staff welcomes any questions related to this topic.