Kauai News

Kaua'i County Council moves to regulate E-bike use amid rising injuries

By Xiomara Yamileth October 23, 2025 · 5:00 AM HST * Updated October 23, 2025 · 7:59 AM

4 minutes







Responding to a sharp rise in injuries and emergency calls linked to high-speed electric bicycles, a committee of the Kaua'i County Council unanimously passed a bill that would regulate how and where electric bikes can be used, and mandate helmet use by minors.

Bill No. 2972, which passed the Public Works and Veterans Services Committee on Wednesday, now goes before the County Council for second reading on Oct. 29.



The Kaua'i County Council held a three-hour session on Wednesday, October 22, 2025. (Photo Credit: Screenshot from the Public Works and Veterans Services Committee meeting.)

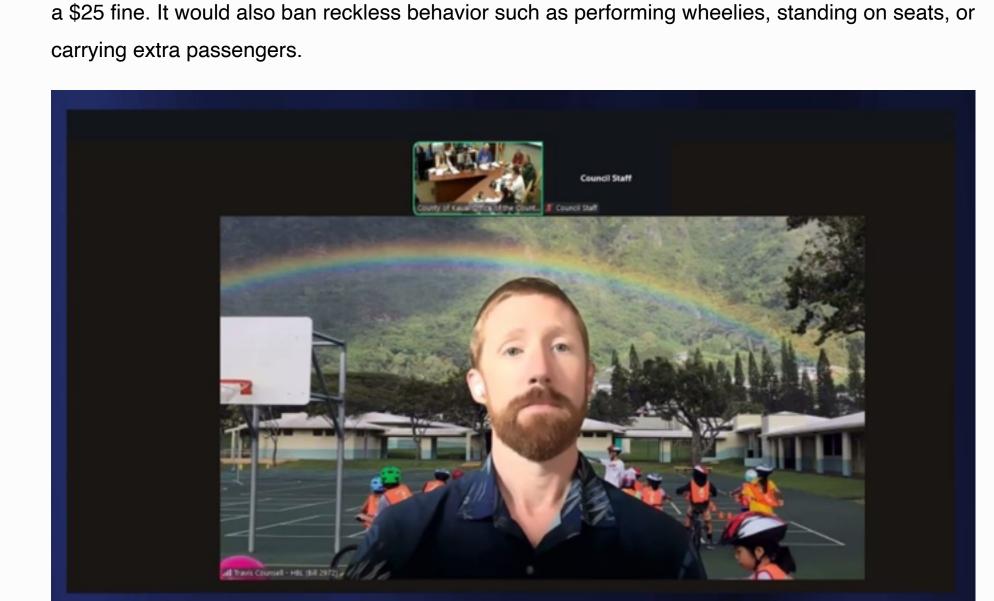
"We had kind of a vigorous conversation, because ... there are two different groups of riders for the most part," Councilmember Felicia Cowden said.

Under the bill, e-bikes with motors under 750 watts and a top speed of 28 miles per hour would be allowed on public roads on Kaua'i.

But the bill prohibits the more powerful "high-speed electric devices" from using the above surfaces. These type of e-bikes are defined as having motors exceeding 750 watts or can go faster than 28 miles per hour — but it does not include a four-wheeled vehicle, moped or motorcycle that can legally be operated on a road or street.

In Hawai'i state law, a "low-speed electric bicycle" is legally defined as having pedals, a motor

producing less than 750 watts of power, and a top speed under 20 mph. Riders under age 15 may not operate them. The proposed county bill would require helmet use for e-bike riders under 18, with violators facing



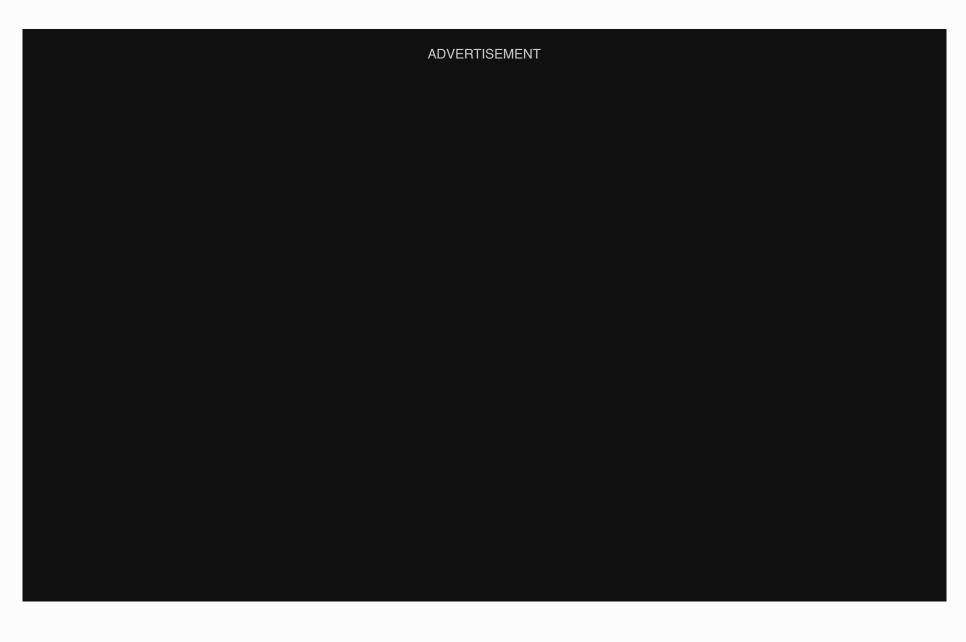
During Wednesday's meeting, Travis Counsell, executive director of the Hawai'i Bicycling League, shared his expertise and offered his remarks. (Photo Credit: Screenshot from the Public Works and Veterans Services Committee meeting.)

"This bill is good," said Travis Counsell, executive director of the Hawai'i Bicycling League. "However, rather than focusing on the devices, focus on the behavior and speed limits — which would give police the power to better enforce cyclist conduct on paths."

Counsell noted that Bill 2972 was modeled after a similar measure adopted by the Honolulu City Council and signed into law earlier this year.

"There's a desire to improve laws and definitions around electric bikes and similar devices," Counsell said. "But counties are limited because the state did not update its code last year. Hopefully, we'll see that happen in the next legislative session."

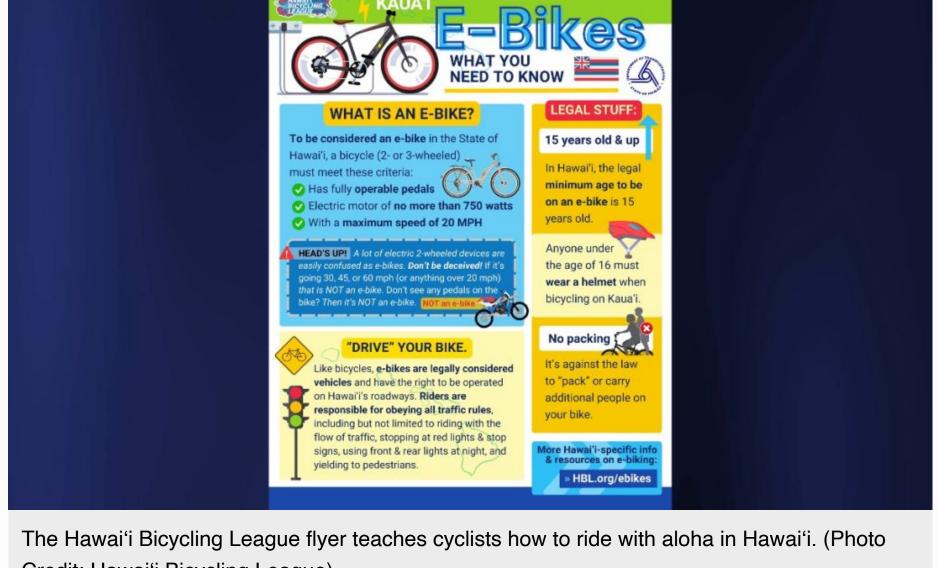
Counsell said most adults who use e-bikes for commuting "follow the rules just as much as anybody else on the road," but said many of the current problems stem from unregulated, highspeed devices being used by youth.



legal definitions — those capable of speeds over 28 mph," he said. During public testimony, one community member emphasized the need for stronger parental

"One of the main issues we're seeing is among younger age groups using bikes that don't meet

accountability: "To all the parents out there - I'm 71 years old and protected as a kūpuna under state law. If your child assaults me with an electric bike, it won't be a good legal outcome for the parents. That's what we need to focus on."



Credit: Hawai'i Bicycling League) Another resident said: "It's too bad you can't legislate common sense. But you need legislation so

you can have litigation — people don't take it seriously until it hits their pockets. Speed is important because I can be seriously injured as a kūpuna, even by someone on a regular bicycle. I encourage the council to keep at it." Councilmember Fern Holland expressed concern about the speed limit, noting that "it could

restrict responsible adult riders." "If there's a way to include educational requirements in the bill, that would help," said

Councilmember Mel Rapozo, who introduced the measure. "Those who use e-bikes for transportation typically follow the rules," Cowden added. "The real

issue is children using them as toys." Everyone agreed that education must be part of the solution.

"We want to use this bill as a tool to educate the public — to work with Kaua'i police on an outreach campaign, not to harass or cite kids," said Rapozo. Counsell said: "I think we're not only on the legal side, but the public side. There's a need for

better education and understanding of where these devices can be used."

Cowden added, "We support the use of e-bikes for transportation for adults, and I certainly see where it is valuable as a vehicle for people, but we really need parents to engage and not allow their kids to do unsafe behavior because it's a different mindset than somebody who's just trying

to get from A to B." For more information on how to cycle with Aloha, donate, or join the Hawai'i Bicycling League, click here.



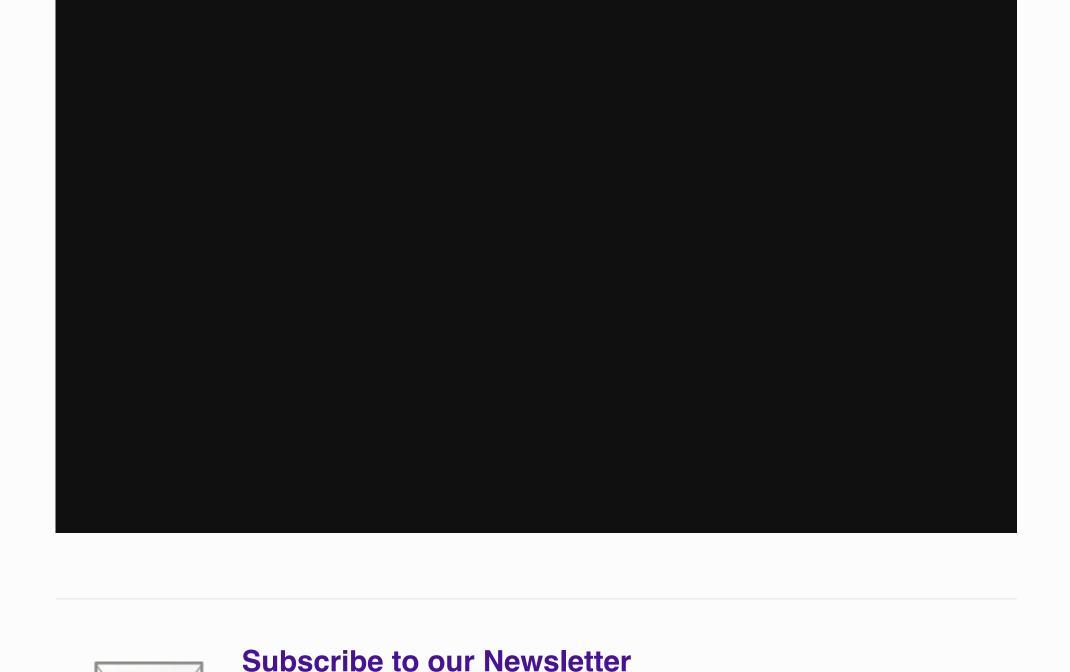
graduated from UCLA, and has covered significant events, including the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests in Seattle. She has

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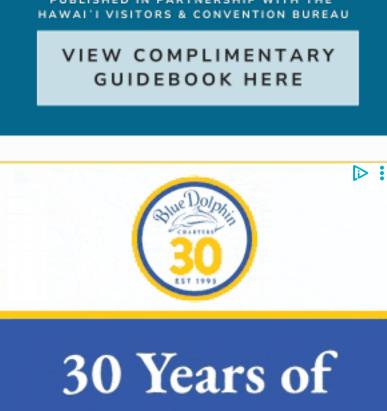
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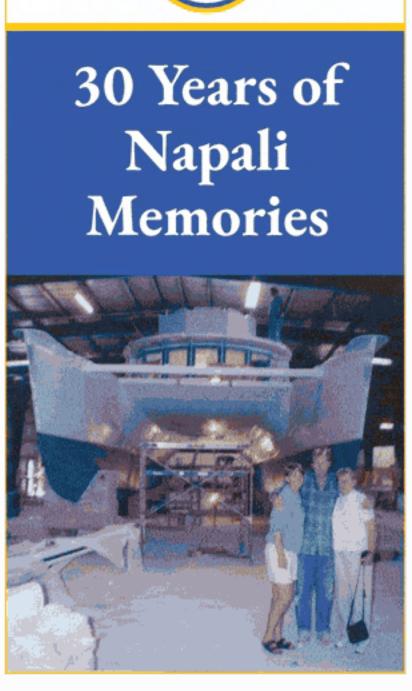
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