

HAWAII NEWS

KOKUA LINE

Kokua Line: What happened to new state rules for e-bikes?



By Christine Donnelly

Aug. 24, 2025

Question: I have a question about House Bill 958, the e-bike omnibus bill, which Gov. Josh Green vetoed in July. If a measure like this is submitted during the next legislative session, will the governor sign it if it exempts electric cars (the objection stated in his veto rationale)? Or did he have other objections to the bill as well?

Answer: “Governor Green was fully supportive of the provisions contained within

HB 958, and only vetoed it due to the flaw inadvertently banning EVs. While the governor would need to see the specifics of new legislation, he has committed to working with the Legislature this coming session to pass meaningful legislation addressing this critical issue,” a spokesperson said in an email Thursday, attributing the response to the Office of the Governor.

Some advocates of HB 958, which passed the state House and Senate, disputed that it would have affected electric vehicles, saying in news reports before Green’s veto that it was focused on one-, two- or three-wheeled electric bicycles or devices, not four-wheeled electric cars and trucks.

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We emailed the state attorney general's office Thursday, asking about its advice to the governor on HB 958 and what language a future attempt would need to pass muster. A spokesperson said the department "cannot make statements about possible legal opinions or advisement given to clients" and referred all questions about the veto to the governor.

Among many other provisions of interest to Kokua Line readers, which we'll write about in future columns, HB 958 would have redefined "electric bicycle" under state law, specifically excluding a "high-speed electric device" from the definition, and mandating that "no person shall operate a high-speed electric device on a public roadway, a bicycle lane, travel paths, bicycle facilities, and other designated areas, such as streets, highways, and sidewalks."

Advocates say this would stem the proliferation of powerful two-wheeled electric devices such as dirt bikes on public property statewide without impeding the use of slower e-bikes.

In his veto rationale, Green said that "while mopeds and motorcycles are exempt from the prohibition established within this bill on 'high-speed electric devices' driving on public roadways, electric cars are not exempt. Such a prohibition would likely violate the Commerce Clause and Equal

Protection Clause of the United States Constitution and conflict with the administration's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

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Updating the statewide traffic code with “essential definitions” for e-bikes, bicycle safety and micromobility devices remains a top priority of the Hawaii Bicycling League, said Advocacy Director Eduardo Hernandez, who lamented the governor’s veto and said the organization will try again next legislative session.

“We have a real epidemic of traffic violence on Oahu and this bill was vetoed on a hypothetical and that’s a shame. It would have had an immediate impact. The city did as much as it could but it could not go beyond state law” to ban high-speed electric devices “which is one reason we needed the state to adopt HB 958,” he said Thursday.

HBL will back a similar bill next session that explicitly states that the definition of “high-speed electric device” doesn’t include a moped or motor vehicle that is registered as required by law to operate on public roadways, or a motor vehicle that is specifically exempted from such registration, Hernandez said.

At the municipal level, Bill 52, which Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi signed into law in February after the City Council approved it, established rules for e-bike use on Oahu, including prohibiting unsafe riding behaviors and requiring helmets for riders under 18. The city ordinance adheres to the definition of bicycle in the statewide traffic code and does not mention high-speed electric devices.

Read the Honolulu County law at 808ne.ws/47btnJ8 . Read HB 958’s path through the Legislature, including the bill itself, committee reports and testimony for and against the measure at 808ne.ws/-3HKWvMI .

As of Wednesday, there have been 85 traffic-related deaths statewide in 2025, including 27 motorcycle or moped operators, five bicyclists and four “other nonoccupants,” a category that includes skateboarders, monowheel riders and foot scooter riders, according to the state

Department of Transportation. Fifty-four of the total deaths occurred on Oahu, more than double the number that had occurred by the same date in 2024.

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