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E-bike regulation cruising after 2025 veto



By Andrew Gomes

Today • *Last updated 11:51 p.m.*



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Rep. Darius Kila waves to passing motorists during a

rally at the State Capitol, Friday, Sept. 12, 2025, in Honolulu.



Legislation to regulate high-speed electric bikes throughout Hawaii is moving down a smooth road so far this year after a bump last year that led to a similar bill being vetoed.

More than two dozen state lawmakers introduced House Bill 2021 in January to restrict where such vehicles can be ridden and by whom, while also requiring disclosures to buyers at the point of sale.

The bill is almost an exact copy of a measure that the Legislature passed last year, except for small technical changes, clarifications and elimination of language that unintentionally seemed to apply the restrictions, including a roadway ban, to electric cars.

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HB 2021, introduced by 23 of 51 House members led by Rep. Darius Kila, was first advanced Feb. 10 during an initial public hearing by the House Transportation Committee chaired by Kila (D, Nanakuli-Maili).

Kila also led the introduction of last year's bill, HB 958, which Gov. Josh Green vetoed over concerns that it would have made the use of EVs on public roads illegal.

Since the veto, Kila said he's been haunted by e-bike rider deaths that have occurred.

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“I don’t think it’s a secret,” he said, “in the interim many communities ... have faced this challenge of trying to find a path forward to allow safe regulation of bicycles that belong on our roadways and a path forward to take those (unlicensed, unregistered and uninsured high-speed e-bikes) off our roadways.”

Tragedies involving e-bikes since HB 958 was vetoed include the death of a 14-year-old boy in Ewa Beach struck by a vehicle as he was riding an electric dirt bike in a marked crosswalk against a red do-not-cross signal, according to police.

Kila is confident that this year’s bill won’t face the same problem as last year’s bill because the director of the Department of Transportation and the Attorney General contributed to agreed-upon language for HB 2021.

Like last year’s bill, HB 2021 proposes to

establish three classes of e-bikes in part by speed capability, and prohibits people under the age of 16 from operating the higher-speed class capable of propulsion by motor over 28 mph.

The use of higher-speed e-bikes also wouldn't be allowed on public roads, bike lanes or sidewalks. There is a provision to allow electric mopeds and motorcycles in line with gas-powered mopeds and motorcycles.

Another part of the bill would require that manufacturers and distributors affix a prominent label on e-bikes that discloses information in writing that includes their top assisted speed and where the device is legal to ride, while also posting a sign near the point of sale stating that the operation of e-bikes is regulated with certain use and rider restrictions.

Last year's bill was passed by the Legislature on April 30, and its provisions restricting use were to become effective upon enactment followed by seller disclosures on Dec. 31, 2025. But Green vetoed the measure on July 3.

The governor said the bill, which amended the statewide traffic code with new descriptions and restrictions for using "high-speed electric devices," would have applied to electric cars.

Hawaii Bicycling League Advocacy Director Eduardo Hernandez at the time said it was a shame that HB 958 failed to become law.

“It seems as if the Governor has prioritized a hypothetical legal technicality over common sense safety strategies, even while traffic deaths are soaring,” Hernandez said in a statement shortly after the veto.

On Monday, Hernandez added that HBL was disappointed that the the Attorney General didn’t raise any concerns over definitions in HB 958 last year until after all discussion of the bill by House and Senate committees was done.

Now, HBL is keen to see HB 2021 reach the governor for enactment.

“This bill will provide an important foundation to define bicycles in statute, and where and how they can be used safely,” Hernandez said in an email.

Kila acknowledged efforts by the City and County of Honolulu along with the Honolulu Police Department to reduce unsafe e-bike use on Oahu, but also said statewide regulations are needed.

About a year ago, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi signed a city bill that prohibits e-bikes exceeding 750 watts from public

roads, and mandates that riders under 18 years of age wear a helmet.

The state Department of Education in November announced that electric motorcycles and electric dirt bikes aren't allowed on school campuses. DOE also said lower speed e-bikes, which HB 2021 defines as providing assisted power up to 20 mph, aren't allowed on elementary or middle/intermediate school campuses because they are illegal for riders under the age of 15. The lower power e-bikes are permitted on high school campuses if they have a county bike license on the frame.

Kila said he appreciates such efforts but that a broader statewide framework regulating high-speed e-bikes is still needed via HB 2021.

“Everyone has worked in the interim without a framework,” he said at the committee hearing. “If we can adopt this as our foundation, we can build structure moving after. But right now, we’re trying to build a house without a foundation. So this is our foundation legislation.”

Rep. Luke Evslin, a House Transportation Committee member, thanked Kila for his work to fix the bill and shepherd it forward.

“I think that as we all know, electric vehicles — I mean, electric bicycles — are a critical

tool to help people get around, especially those who cannot afford a car and younger people,” said Evslin (D, Wailua-Lihue). “But we need a clear regulatory framework to make sure that they’re safe. So, I appreciate you doing your work on this over the interim and hopefully we can get this bill through and pass it this session.”

Rep. Trish La Chica, another committee member, also thanked Kila and lamented the failure last year.

“I know how it felt when we got so close last year and almost made it through,” said La Chica (D, Waipio-Mililani). “Really our goal is to have zero fatalities on the road, and we’ve waited far too long to regulate this.”

On Thursday, the House Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee chaired by Rep. David Tarnas advanced the bill with minor changes for consideration by the full House.

“This is now cleaned up, and we’ve addressed the concerns,” said Tarnas (D, Hawi-Waimea-Waikoloa).

If the bill clears the Senate and any necessary final votes by the Legislature expected by May and becomes law, road use provisions would take effect upon enactment and provisions on disclosures to buyers would take effect within 120 days after that.

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