



Vehicle Laws - Electric Bicycles - Certificate of Title, Registration, and Insurance
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association – UNFAVORABLE

January 22, 2025

Chair Smith and Committee Members,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) opposes SB 14, which would impose a titling and registration requirement on e-bike owners and alter insurance rules.

According to a 2023 Environmental Law & Policy Center paper, "Electric bikes create no carbon emissions or air pollution while riding. But even considering the impacts of manufacturing, electric charging, and food for the rider, an e-bike is responsible for 93% less climate impact than a fossil-fueled passenger vehicle per mile." Simply put, e-bikes are the greenest – the most energy efficient – form of transportation, and they're growing in popularity as a car replacement for short- and medium-distance trips. We should be encouraging e-bike adoption and should not be creating impediments, as SB 14 would!

SB 14 would impose an administrative burden and a financial cost on e-bike purchasers and owners. Those significant costs would extend to bike-share operators and the local governments, including in Montgomery and Prince George's County, who underwrite system costs. And net of administrative and enforcement costs – I'm picturing police officers being directed to pull over e-bike riders for not displaying a registration decal – SB 14 will generate negligible revenue.

There is no positive safety argument that would justify passing SB 14. Few citations are written for e-bikes traffic violations, simply because few infractions – despite anecdotes – significantly threaten the safety of anyone on the road. Officers' attention is better directed toward actual safety threats.

Finally, Maryland local jurisdictions already have voluntary, free bicycle registration programs. They include, for instance, Montgomery County, Baltimore County, the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office, the Frederick Police Department, and the City of Annapolis. These programs are vital for theft recovery.

We don't know the sponsor's intent or goals in introducing SB 14, but we do know that the bill would have negative transportation, environmental, financial, and safety impacts, and the registration requirement is significantly redundant. WABA therefore urges an unfavorable reading for SB 14.