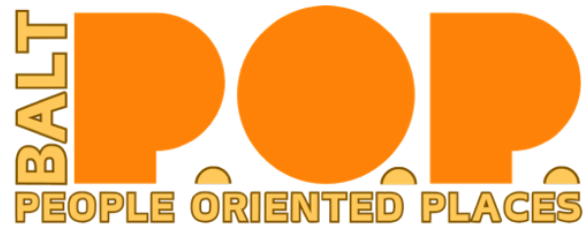


Bill: SB0743

Bill Title: Workgroup to Study State Laws on Electric Bicycles - Establishment

Position: **Unfavorable**



Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As a group that advocates for transportation options which contribute to the liveability, productivity, and overall appeal of our communities comprising the Baltimore region, we are very much in support of seeing greater adoption of electric bicycles. But, we don't see the workgroup SB0743 would create being the best route for accomplishing that.

We are concerned with the bill's call for the workgroup to be heavily skewed toward law enforcement interests. This could result in an overly restrictive set of recommendations being issued by the workgroup that are overly focused on public safety. This would be a shame, as greater adoption of electric bicycles would bring with it a host of benefits.

In addition, it is our understanding that MDOT has launched a Micromobility Safety Task Force (MSTF) that is focused on safety pertaining to electric bicycles and other electric devices - including the faster, more powerful devices commonly called "e-motos" that are often marketed as e-bikes. In contrast to the membership called for by this bill's workgroup, the MSTF will have a broad membership that will study the issue from a comprehensive number of angles.

Any legislation-focused recommendations that may be beyond the scope of the MSTF are slated to be made by the Legislative Subcommittee of the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (MBPAC), which is sponsored by MDOT.

In short, we feel that the workgroup called for by this bill is duplicative of efforts that are already underway within MDOT, and being pursued in a more capable fashion than would be by this bill's workgroup.

If it is decided that MDOT's efforts are insufficient, we would like to see this bill call for the envisioned workgroup to include **three bicycle advocates** to counterbalance the three representatives of law enforcement agencies currently called for in the bill.

With the bill's focus on law enforcement representation, it would appear that the bill is attempting to equate electric bicycles with automobiles, motorcycles, and mopeds. But, electric bicycles promise a number of benefits and advantages, especially in comparison to automobiles, including the following:

- Whereas automobiles (and to a lesser degree motorcycles) put significant wear and tear on roadways, electric bicycles do not.
- Whereas automobiles are most often built for four or more passengers, yet are used to transport only a single occupant most of the time, electric bicycles offer a 10x greater roadway throughput and can reduce roadway congestion.
- Whereas the starting price for an automobile is such that owning one can be out of reach for many lower-income residents, the price points of electric bicycles are much more affordable.
- Whereas automobiles pose a tremendous risk (in terms of death and serious injury) to any pedestrian they strike, the risk profile of electric bicycles to pedestrians is obviously less. Furthermore, a person driving an automobile is put at very little personal risk of injury in any such crash, whereas the same cannot be said of a person riding an electric bicycle. As such, a person riding an electric bicycle has ample reason to travel in the presence of pedestrians with ample caution.
- Whereas an automobile requires that we waste valuable land on unproductive parking lots and/or expensive parking garages (which contribute to housing unaffordability), electric bicycles require a small fraction of that storage space.
- Whereas automobiles (and to a lesser degree motorcycles) are a sedentary form of transportation, electric bicycles are an active form of transportation which contributes to improved physical health.
- Whereas the carbon emission profile of automobiles is slowly improving from a deeply negative starting point, the carbon emission profile of electric bicycles puts them central to the clean transportation transition - today.

In short, the collective benefits Maryland stands to yield from greater adoption of electric bicycles is large, whereas the relative risk profile is low. As such, we don't understand this bill's focus on filling the workgroup with law enforcement interests.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote against SB0743**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

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