

## Commission to consider electric vehicle ordinance

Hector Flores

Recognizing the growing popularity of motorized bicycles, scooters and other motorized vehicles in Charlotte County and a corresponding increase in accidents involving these vehicles, the County Commission on Tuesday will consider adopting an ordinance regulating them in unincorporated areas of the county. The proposed ordinance was drafted in cooperation with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office.

The ordinance identifies where such devices can be operated, how fast they can go and safety precautions required for riders under 16 years of age. They would also be required to have a headlight on when operating between dusk and dawn.

The ordinance would limit the speed at which devices can be operated on sidewalks, multiuse paths and bicycle lanes to 15 miles per hour. On roads, operators would have to adhere to the posted speed limit. The devices would not be allowed to be operated on greenways, greenbelts or trails.

There are also bills moving through the Florida Legislature addressing electric vehicles. Included in both the House of Representatives and Senate versions is language requiring e-bike riders on a shared pathway that is not located adjacent to a roadway, including a shared pathway in a park or recreational area, to yield to any pedestrian and must give an audible signal before overtaking and passing a pedestrian.

They also set speed limits of 10 mph on sidewalks or other areas designated for pedestrian use if a pedestrian is within 50 feet of the electric bicycle. Failure to comply is a noncriminal traffic infraction. The proposed county ordinance contains similar language about pedestrian right-of-way and verbal signals.

The language in the state bill is not final and must be approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by the governor. Depending on the final version and whether it passes, the law would go into effect in July 2026 or next year.

The bill also would create a task force made up of officials from the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Department of Transportation; the Florida Sheriffs Association and Florida Police Chiefs Association; the e-bike industry; the Florida League of Cities; the Florida Association of Counties and someone from the medical field.

The rapid rise in the number of electric devices in use over the past decade has led to a related increase in the number of accidents, injuries and deaths in Florida. According to a 2024 study by the JAMA Network, the number of accidents doubled every year between 2017 to 2022. The JAMA Network is an online publication of the American Medical Association. It's difficult to tabulate e-bike accidents in Florida because the state classifies them as bicycles and the numbers are not broken out between electronic and pedal bicycles.

The meeting is open to the public and will be streamed live on the county's television channel, CC-TV (Comcast channel 20) or on our website [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/cctv](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/cctv) and on our Facebook and YouTube pages. It will also be livestreamed on the county Roku channel.

*Readers may reach Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores at [Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*