

Punta Gorda, April 1th 2016

Florida Bicycle Association interested in Electric Bicycle as a policy question

Dear Customer and Friends of pedelecSQB Electric Bicycle Store

One day early this year I watched through the tinted windows of my newly opened Shop. I was concerned, with the moody weather at that day. Would somebody come in and get out for a test ride at all? When Christopher LeDew dropped in and it turned out later on, that he actually is a brother in the cause if it comes to electric bicycle.

Some weeks later I got an e-mail from him with an article that is meanwhile published in the Messenger of the Florida Bicycle Association. I was so baffled to read in that article, that he really did mirror the information and facts he learned from me on electric bicycles, that I have to share this article with you. It may be a little bit more to read as usually, but it is certainly worth it.

Thanks again Chris to give me the permission to publish this on my newsletter. And for the rest, enjoy the funny but still serious and accurate article on electric bicycle that follows here.

Sincerely yours

Phil Pfaeffli
Team pedelecSQB

FBA Newsletter Article Electric Bikes

Those of you that know me, know that I have a soft spot in my heart for commuter cyclists. Anyone who chooses not to drive in the comfort of a Volvo station wagon and instead rides our busy urban streets in the height of rush hour; anyone who, behind a make-shift cubicle divider, takes a full body baby-wipes bath; anyone who then soldiers on through an eight-hour work day in wrinkled clothes and messed-up hair has earned my respect. Commuter cyclists are displacing "one more car" from our roads, they are lowering our collective blood pressure and saving penguin habitat. Building exercise into my daily routine makes a lot of sense...but not enough to actually make me it.

When I heard that the FBA was interested in Electric Bikes as a policy question, I jumped at the chance to be part of the committee. The thought of riding a powered bike intrigued me. Extended range, sweat-free travel, the perfect urban commuter, the gee-whiz techno gadgetry! Maybe, just maybe, this was my entry into the ranks of the urban commuter cyclist!

As a traffic engineer, I have been asked to accommodate a wide range of exotic vehicles on our public roadways. Gone are the days that engineers thought only about cars and trucks. Now we have to stretch our mental capacity and design for bicycles and pedestrians...uh, excuse me: “people that ride bikes” and “people that walk”.

Rapidly, new vehicles are filling the spaces in between: mopeds, golf-carts, neighborhood electric vehicles, scooters, Segways, hover boards, gas-powered bicycles, electric skateboards and self-balancing unicycles are all on the market. Each mode of transportation has its own unique acceleration, deceleration and handling characteristics. Each mode has its own legal definition and place on the road (some only on private roads).

About eight years ago, I researched electric bikes online and found mostly do-it-yourself-kits and clunky-looking bikes with motors and battery packs hanging off of them with what appeared to be duct-tape and baling wire. I found Youtube videos of brave souls that piloted their converted Huffy to speeds exceeding 45 MPH. Hmmm, I thought, wasn't this last year's Darwin award winner?

Anyway, fast forward to the present, and the electric bike offerings are sleek, well-designed, futuristic, high-tech marvels. Power-assisted “smart” motors provide power only when the rider pedals. This new class of transportation is known as “Pedelec”, which rhymes with “Cadillac” (Yes, Bruce Springsteen, I'm talking to you!). Pedelecs are capable of traveling up to 20 MPH and are legally classified as a regular human-powered bicycle. An “S Pedelec” is a souped-up version which will do 30MPH and is the legal equivalent of a Moped. The difference is, you can actually pedal a Pedelec!

Electric Worldwide Bike Reports estimates that in 2010, 30 million electric bikes were sold in the world. Eighty thousand were sold in the USA, one million were sold in the European Union and 27 million were sold in China. We all have known that China is taking over...but I didn't know it would be from the back of an electric bike! By 2025, it is projected that half of all new bikes sold in America will be electric bikes.

After hours of internet searches, I had successfully stoked the fires of electric bike lust in my consumerist soul. I had to ride one of these things! Googling “Electric Bike Shops Florida” I found the only exclusive Electric Bike Shop in Florida, and luckily it was located on the way to the Quarterly FBA Board of Directors meeting in Ft. Myers.

After a few clicks of the mouse, I had scheduled my first test ride with “Pedelec SQB” in Punta Gorda, Florida (www.pedelec-sqb.com). SQB stands for “Swiss Quality Bound”. A few days and a five-hour drive later, I was standing in the shop of Phil Pfäffli in downtown Punta Gorda. Phil explained in great detail the features of the pedelecs: the power-assist smart motors, the ex-

tended rage lithium ion batteries, the heavy-duty brake and shifting components, blah, blah, blah. Sorry Phil, but the look and feel of the Stromer was drowning out your sales pitch. This machine has design and style, attention to detail, and—dare I say it?—sex appeal. This bike is the Porsche 911 of electric bicycles. I'm sure Phil has seen it before, the electric bike lust, the stammering, the drooling. He knew it was time for a ride.



On a windy, drizzly January day we set out onto the Punta Gorda sidewalk. Phil apologizes for the Florida weather and suggests we ride inside a nearby parking garage. “At least you get to experience a hill.” He sets the bike on “Eco mode,” the lowest setting, so it doesn’t get away from me. About 10 revolutions in and I am resetting to the highest “turbo mode”. Ten more revs and I am feeling like superman riding the garage ramps up to the third level! This was great! Soon, the sun broke through the clouds and Phil suggested I ride a couple of miles to the Fishing Village. I used my Cycling Savvy training to take the lane, ride in traffic and confidently make my way through a crowded Punta Gorda Friday afternoon. At one point, on a flat straightaway, I

pedaled at my most leisurely pace, doing what felt like 10-12 mph. I looked down at the speedometer and I was going 24mph. Wow! I was hooked! I want one!

The pedelec was not what I was expecting. I thought it would be like riding a gas scooter or a small motorcycle, where you twist the throttle and go. Where you can be as lazy as you want. But this was different, you have the feel and responsiveness of a bicycle. Its your own power, only more. The exhilaration that smart motor brings is, well, fun! The emotional part of my brain began to take over: instead of asking "Why do I need this?", I'm asking "How can I justify this to my wife?"

The next day, after the euphoria wore off, I thought more about the pedelec, who would use it in 'Merica? What problems might they create operating on public roads? I see them as capable commuter vehicles for anyone within 20-30 miles of work or a bus stop. Many people with physical limitations use pedelecs for access to recreation trails and for the sheer joy of riding a bike. The FBA Electric Bike Committee is just beginning to examine the pros and cons of electric bikes in Florida. There are many questions that need to be answered: What safety concerns are associated with a bike that is silent and travels 20 mph faster than one may expect? Why did China outlaw electric bikes from bike lanes? Was it because of speed or sheer numbers? What problems will surface when we mix high-speed pedelecs with lower-speed bikes and pedestrians? How can Florida's rules be consistent when state and local governments and recreation departments are all setting laws and rules independently? Will "serious" cyclists shun those that ride electric bikes? What emotional trauma will that cause?

Please let us know your thoughts and experiences with electric bikes! Get ready! They are coming...fast!!!