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Vermont House Committee on Transportation
Montpelier, VT

Dear Chair Lanpher and Members of the House Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Local Motion, a statewide advocacy organization for biking and walking, regarding S.66 which defines the different classes of E-bikes. We feel this is timely legislation to consider and support. We appreciate your efforts to update Vermont's laws concerning E-bikes and setting the stage for the important role that E-bikes play as a healthy and equitable transportation option for Vermonters now and in the future

For many Vermonters the e-bike represents an affordable, accessible, and climate-friendly replacement for a car. They allow a bicyclist to go further with less effort, even on the hilly terrain in our state, making it possible for more people to use a bike for their daily commute, to get around town (or between towns) to meet their daily needs, or for exercise and recreation.

S.66 will allow Vermont to join with the 28 states that already have similar legislation. Although we support the bill, there are two adjustments that we would like the committee to adopt. First, S.66 includes a provision that allows entities that have jurisdiction over bicycle and multiuse paths to prohibit class 1 and 2 E-bikes "following notice and a public hearing." We would like this provision to apply to class 3 bikes as well in order to create a consistent, fair, and transparent process across all classes of bikes. (in Sec 6. 23 V.S.A §1136a).

Second, S.66 as written will leave a large number of existing e-bikes in a grey area. These include e-bikes built with retrofit kits that allow users to turn an existing standard bicycle or cargo bike into an e-bike or electric cargo bike. These kits generally do not have speed controllers and do not come with stickers indicating their class, and thus will not fit into the proposed three-class system. Some are also powered by 1000-watt motors, which are safe and very beneficial for riders and families using heavier cargo bikes to traverse Vermont's hilly terrain on their way to school and the grocery store. These high-quality kits are generally an excellent choice for consumers who own an existing bicycle, as they allow the buyer to enjoy all of the benefits of an e-bike at a significantly lower cost than would be incurred if they were to purchase a new, complete bicycle. Retrofit kits have numerous other consumer and local-

business benefits, including that they are usually serviceable locally, while e-bikes made by larger manufacturers increasingly are not, and the kits can be transferred to another bicycle.

These are important and significant consumer benefits that we should protect, but are not included in the legislation under consideration, which in this case is primarily representing the interests of large bicycle manufacturers. It is also notable that retrofit kits, including those with motors of 1000 watts, are currently legal under Vermont law and thus have been recommended to Vermont consumers by organizations like Local Motion and VBike through State-funded consultations provided through the Go! Vermont program. Our recommendation is that the legislature either table this legislation for further discussion until a method of defining e-bikes built with retrofit kits as electric bicycles is found, or, to make a simple change to the proposed definition of "motor-assisted bicycle" such that it includes bicycles or tricycles with electric motors. This will ensure that the many e-bikes already on our roads and paths that do not fit into the three-class system are still defined by law. Here is our recommended text change, but we are aware that there may be other ways to accomplish this as well: (B)(i) "Motor-assisted bicycle" means any bicycle or tricycle with fully operable pedals and equipped with an internal combustion or electric motor that:"

Our organization works hard to make sure that E-bikes are a part of Vermont's transportation future. We operate an E-bike Lending Library that travels the state lending out e-bikes for free so individuals can try them out, and many have purchased their own e-bike after. Through our work, we have seen first-hand the importance of e-bikes for people (see testimonials attached). We encourage the Committee to support S.66, with our suggested changes.

Sincerely,



Karen Yacos

E-bike Testimonials - Submitted by Local Motion

4/6/21

“I rented the Urban Arrow for my family and for four glorious days we survived without our car. **I was happier, my kids were happier and everyone we passed had smiles on their faces.** We loved it!” - South Burlington, VT

“I have a disability that makes it difficult to ride a bicycle. That, combined with the rural, hilly nature of my town, kept me from being able to ride in my community. My health was suffering as a result. I purchased an e-bike this summer, and all of that changed. The freedom and the new, deeper, connection to my community has been a huge gift during COVID. My health has improved significantly, and I have a much stronger and deeper connection to my town. **My e-bike has, without exaggeration, changed my life.**” - Isle La Motte, VT

(This is an example of an E-bike made with a conversion kit, and uses a mid-drive 1000-watt pedal assist motor, necessary for this person to haul the heavy bike and child up a steep hill near home)

“Loved having the e-bikes - my husband and I both had one on different weekends - and we shared them with neighbors and friends. I commuted to work on them both and encouraged my co-workers to try it too. I also rode down to the White River coop from Norwich for groceries...came back with a full bag and a six pack! **I loved going up the hills I often avoid.**” - Norwich, VT

“I am the race director for Howard Center’s Zoe’s Race and I used the bike to help lug things around for our event. **Having the bike made getting supplies out to locations up and down the bike path and through neighborhoods a breeze.**” - Burlington, VT

(Poem from Laurie, cyclist in Colchester)

Oh the places we'll go!
We'll be on our way now!
With our new e-bikes we head to bike paths and road.
From April to November, even through snow.

Towing a red trailer behind Ruby Gazelle.
To the grocery and OGE, or picnic at Snow Farm Winery.
The causeway and Bike Ferry on the weekend itinerary.

We fly from Lake Street to UVM up that Main Street hill.
A quick stop at the lights, up up we will sail.
With a child's grin and a giggle, I shuss from St. Louis to intervale.

A vacation you say? Oh yes, let's go!
Pick a place to explore bike trails, no matter the terrain.
With e-bikes, our lives are forever changed.

