

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 23

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Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry introducing
LD 256, “An Act to Add Electric Bicycles to the
Electric Vehicle Rebate Program”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
February 7, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today I am very excited to introduce my bill LD 256, “An Act to Add Electric Bicycles to the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program.”

LD 256 would add electric bicycles, commonly known as “e-bikes,” to Efficiency Maine’s Vehicle Rebate Program. In my testimony, I want to describe the many benefits that an e-bike rebate program will have for the people of Maine. Before I dive in, though, let me “drive” home the ultimate goal. We want to encourage more people to consider commuting by e-bike—instead of by a gas-powered vehicle—because gas-powered cars and vehicles remain the highest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Maine. E-bikes can help us reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which will aid in reducing Maine’s carbon footprint and be a critical part of our efforts to mitigate the worst effects of climate change, like rising sea levels and daytime temperatures.

While we work toward that goal, this rebate program has tremendous potential. Not only is this a climate friendly initiative, it will also help remove cost as a barrier to a Mainer purchasing an e-bike. Look, we know that the past few years, including inflation, have been challenging. Let’s face it, for people with lower, even moderate incomes, the cost of car ownership is a real burden. An e-bike—even before a rebate—is a much more financially attainable mode of transportation than many cars. A rebate puts an e-bike within reach. If someone switches to an e-bike for commuting, then they will save money on gas, auto insurance, parking permits, and maintenance. That’s real savings for the consumer—more money back in their pocket than just the rebate. And, they don’t have to sacrifice being able to haul things from place to place when they switch to an e-bike. Some models have significant cargo capacity. I was even able to use a cargo e-bike to make beer deliveries during the height of the pandemic, and I was amazed at the cargo e-bike’s ease of use and its distance capabilities.

Another benefit of more people buying e-bikes is that there will be fewer cars on the roads. Fewer cars leads to less congestion and traffic, especially during the summer and fall months, which is peak tourism season in Maine. That also means safer roads for all road users: cyclists, pedestrians, dog walkers, farmers, and runners, and people who rely on mobility devices for health or medical reasons. This is huge. When we hear about another cyclist or pedestrian being killed by a vehicle during or after a collision, it's scary. I know this all too well. I was hit while riding my bike just down the road from my house. I'll never forget that day, and neither will my friends and family. Fewer cars and safer roads will reduce the real risks that non-driving people encounter on the road. It will encourage more people to embrace active transportation in their daily lives. Even better, e-bikes help older Mainers and Mainers with disabilities stay active throughout their lives. Pedal-assisting e-bikes make cycling more accessible—and enjoyable—for a much wider range of individuals than traditional muscle-powered bicycles.

And that's where we need to go as a state. If we are going to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and meet our climate change mitigation goals, then we have to help people change how they get from one place to another. Daily commutes add up. Fast. And we can't avoid them. We don't have more efficient, environmentally-friendly public transportation options. So let's start with individuals choosing e-bikes. If a Mainer wants to do their part to reduce their impact on the environment, then cost should not be a barrier. If we want people to live long, healthy lives and keep them out of the hospital, then we need to help them access modes of active transportation. If we want to build livable, sustainable communities then we need to re-design them: fewer cars and parking lots, more e-bikes, and safer roads.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mattie".

Mattie Daughtry

Assistant Senate Majority Leader, Senate District 23

Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth