
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7141

AN ACT REGULATING ELECTRIC FOOT SCOOTERS.

SUMMARY

This bill defines “electric foot scooters” (e-scooters) and generally gives e-scooter riders the same rights, privileges, and duties as existing law provides for bicycle riders. The act also (1) generally allows municipalities to regulate e-scooters, to the extent that state law does not conflict with such regulations, and (2) requires the Office of the State Traffic Administration’s (OSTA) regulations to cover e-scooter operation on highways and roads under its jurisdiction.

The bill also expands the state’s vulnerable user law to (1) cover instances when a driver causes “substantial bodily harm” to a vulnerable user and (2) make e-scooter riders vulnerable users under the law.

Lastly, the bill (1) makes technical and conforming changes related to e-scooters and electric bicycles (e-bikes) and (2) requires e-scooter riders under age 16 to wear helmets that comply with certain standards, which the bill also extends to e-bike riders.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2019

E-SCOOTER DEFINITION

The bill defines “electric foot scooter” as a device that:

1. weighs 65 pounds or less;
2. has two or three wheels, handlebars, and a floorboard that can be stood on while riding;
3. is both electric motor- and human-powered; and
4. has a maximum speed, with or without human propulsion on a

paved level surface, of 20 miles per hour or less.

STATE AND LOCAL REGULATION OF E-SCOOTERS

The bill generally authorizes OSTA to regulate e-scooters within its jurisdiction (i.e., on state highways and roads on state-owned property). The office has this authority with respect to regular bicycles and e-bicycles.

Existing law requires OSTA to adopt regulations governing highways and roads in its jurisdiction, including the operation of motor vehicles and bicycles. The act additionally requires these regulations to cover e-scooter operation.

Existing law grants municipalities authority to regulate regular bicycles, as long as the ordinances do not conflict with state laws or regulations. The act extends this authority to allow municipalities to regulate e-scooters. Thus, among other things, municipalities can adopt ordinances requiring annual licensing of e-scooters or requiring the registration of e-scooter sales and ownership changes.

PARKING E-SCOOTERS

The bill allows a person to park an e-scooter on any sidewalk, as long as (1) the e-scooter is parked in a manner that does not impede the reasonable movement of pedestrians or other sidewalk traffic and (2) doing so is not prohibited by any municipal ordinance or by Office of the State Traffic Administration regulations.

CONFORMING CHANGES TO TREAT E-SCOOTERS LIKE BICYCLES

The act makes conforming changes to treat e-scooters like bicycles and e-bikes. Among other things, it:

1. exempts e-scooters from emissions inspections;
2. requires e-scooter riders to comply with driving laws applicable to bicycles (e.g., signaling before turning);
3. requires motor vehicle operators to treat e-scooters like regular

- bicycles (e.g., when passing);
4. imposes a 100% surcharge on fines for certain moving violations involving a motor vehicle and an e-scooter;
 5. prohibits parents and guardians from authorizing or knowingly permitting their wards to violate state laws or local ordinances on e-scooters; and
 6. makes it an infraction not to equip e-scooters with lights and reflectors.

HELMETS FOR E-BIKES AND E-SCOOTERS

Under existing law, e-bike riders must wear a helmet meeting the minimum specifications established for bicycle helmets by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission or the American Society for Testing and Materials (CGS §14-289k). The bill (1) requires that e-scooter riders under age 16 wear helmets and (2) requires helmets worn by e-bike and e-scooter riders under age 16 to conform to standards established by the Snell Memorial Foundation or the American National Standards Institute.

The bill also requires businesses that rent e-scooters to provide helmets to renters that meet these standards, as they are required to do under current law for bicycle rentals.

Finally, it requires the Department of Consumer Protection to post on its website material concerning the dangers of riding e-bikes and e-scooters and promoting the use of helmets while riding them. Existing law requires the department to do this for bicycles, skateboards, and roller and in-line skates.

VULNERABLE USER LAW

Under existing law, a driver who fails to exercise reasonable care and harms a vulnerable user (e.g., pedestrians, bicyclists, and highway workers) faces a penalty of up to \$1,000. The penalty applies only if the vulnerable user was exercising reasonable care.

Under current law, this penalty applies when the driver causes the serious physical injury or death of a vulnerable user. The bill additionally applies the penalty when drivers cause “substantial bodily harm” to a vulnerable user.

It defines “substantial bodily harm” as bodily injury that (1) involves a temporary but substantial disfigurement, (2) causes a temporary but substantial loss or impairment of a body part’s or organ’s function, or (3) causes the fracture of any body part. It also specifies that “serious physical injury” has the same meaning as it does under the penal code, meaning a physical injury that creates a substantial risk of death, or that causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health, or serious loss or impairment of an organ’s function.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 36 Nay 0 (03/20/2019)