

Are ebikes dangerous?

Discussion in '[Help Choosing an Ebike](#)' started by [Electric Bike Specialists](#), Feb 22, 2014.

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1.

[Electric Bike Specialists](#) *Active Member*

Not everyone likes ebikes.

In China, they're actually known as the "silent killer" because no one hears one before it hits you. They've started outlawing them in certain cities there. NYC has passed it's second law banning ebikes from city streets. Ebikes have found a "grey area" in the law allowing for 28 mph assist.

So:

1. Do you think ebikes are dangerous?
2. Have you heard complaints about ebikes on the streets?
3. Do you think ebikes will continue to have trouble with the law as they become popular?

Obviously we have our views here, but I was really interested in hearing what you guys think.



2.

[James](#) *Well-Known Member*

1) I think any moving machine in unskilled hands is dangerous. Silent killer? Like someone on a bicycle moving at a high rate if speed is noisy? I have heard that silent killer thing and don't get it.

2) I'm pretty sure I'm the only guy for miles and miles that has an ebike so I haven't run across that yet.

3) I do think they will because people fear what they don't understand. In my province (BC) Segways are outlawed everywhere except private property. They are not allowed because someone sitting behind some desk decided it went too fast or that they couldn't possibly have enough hand-eye coordination to operate one safely. With that logic if the everyday bicycle was invented today it would be illegal.

[James, Feb 22, 2014](#)

[#2](#)



3.

[Brambor](#) *Well-Known Member*

by that definition even regular bikes are dangerous. I ride a regular bike and if I ride it on the road then I perceive cars are the killers no matter how quiet or noisy they are their speed vs my speed is too great to react. Therefore we have laws and social norms to be considerate of each other.

At the same token if I ride my bike on a path with a lot of walkers the speed difference between us dictates that I need to be observant by ringing a bell or announcing ahead with words like "on your left" or "on your right" or "two more behind me" All of this on a normal bike. My bike uses a belt drive and is much quieter than the customary chatter of a chain bike.

Should we allow belt drive? Of course not. Ebikes move as fast as racing bikes. We have plenty of those sharing the paths with walkers. Should we outlaw racing bikes? Of course not.

[Brambor, Feb 22, 2014](#)

[#3](#)



4.

[Dave](#) *Active Member*

Ebikes can be dangerous, just like any other moving vehicle. Its up to the rider to make sure the bike is operated safely. As ebikes become more prevalent, I do see more laws being introduced to control their use. That's unfortunate because those laws will probably be in response to riders who are careless with the bike, and somehow injure themselves or others. Currently, ebikes of any type are illegal in NY for use on public roads. Obviously it is not being enforced, but it certainly hasn't started out well here in the Empire State.

[Dave, Feb 22, 2014](#)

[#4](#)



5.

George S. *Well-Known Member*

I was test riding bikes on a decent bike path. It was a perfect Saturday afternoon in St. George, Utah. Maybe 70 degrees. There was a lot of traffic, from walkers (usually paired up) to joggers to families with young children. All I can say is it was hard to go much more than 10 mph, average. You could go the legal limit 20mph on the road, which ran by the bike path here and there. I'd take the bike path, even at half the speed. The performance aspect of some ebikes is not going to do you a lot of good, on a path like this. I was supercautious, not knowing the bikes and all, or the trail. It was nice, really, because you sort of interact with the people. The path, going slow, was the perfect way to ride.

I don't want to see performance ebikers creating a rift with the, um, 'Lycras'. I'd like to see as much bike infrastructure as possible. When you look at the incredible density of bikers in true biking cities in Europe, no one is going very fast. So, if ebike and bikes really become transportation for people, I don't know how fast they will be going. As long as you are at the speed of the 'average' bike, it's not really an issue on something marked "bike path".

There was a sign on the path saying "No Motorized Vehicles". It would not be all that hard to suddenly decide that meant ANY motorized vehicles, if a child got hurt, or something like that. That's why China cracked down, after 2,000 deaths. Sort of a hysterical reaction.

"Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got til it's gone"

[George S., Feb 22, 2014](#)

[#5](#)



6.

calvin *Active Member*

From what I've read, bikes are the second most dangerous(for the rider) means of transportation per mile, the first is horseback, the least is jet.

[calvin, Feb 22, 2014](#)

[#6](#)

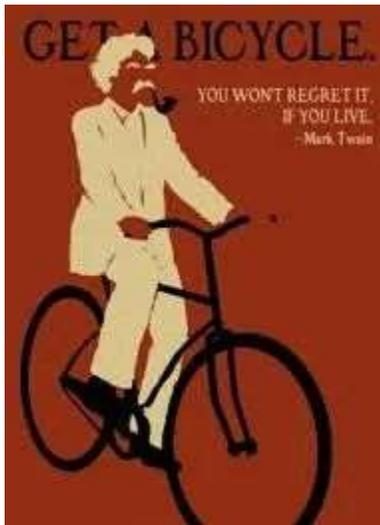
[Court](#) and [Brambor](#) like this.

7.



[Ravi Kempaiah](#) *Well-Known Member*

This question reminds of a quote
"Get a bicycle. You will not regret it, if you live."
- Mark Twain"



But, I am afraid we are completely taking this out of context in our discussion here. The case of ebikes being "silent killers" in China has a lot to do with population density, people not following rules and lack of proper infrastructure.

It is like asking, 'is electricity dangerous?'. Of course it is, one can make electrocution chair or we can light up the world. Similarly, ebikes are excellent mode of transportation BUT if we are asked to go on roads with other cars, it is dangerous for both. All it takes to make biking safe is a side road, specifically for bikers, and it need not be more than 10ft in width (~width of 1 lane). Stockholm, Zurich, Denmark, Amsterdam etc, have excellent biking infrastructure and we don't see people killing each other. If we go on American roads with big SUV's and its callous drivers, we are putting ourselves in serious danger.

I never ride on the road along with cars. Thanks to my Jumper, my rides have been great so far on the side pavements and bike trails and I get to my destination faster.
Look at these images and all we need is, roads like this:



Last edited: Feb 23, 2014

[Ravi Kempaiah](#), [Feb 23, 2014](#)

[#7](#)

[Court](#), [Electric Bike Specialists](#), [calvin](#) and [1 other person](#) like this.



8.

[EddieJ](#) *Well-Known Member*

One issue that I have had in relation to riding the ebike, is that very often when traveling up hills, following vehicle drivers don't seem to be able to judge the speed that I am cycling at, so when I approach parked cars for example, following car drivers will try to overtake at the wrong moment, so making me slow or stop. Although I don't like it, I kind of don't blame them and anticipate now as being the norm.

[EddieJ](#), [Feb 23, 2014](#)

[#8](#)

[Electric Bike Specialists](#) and [James](#) like this.



9.

[James](#) *Well-Known Member*

EddieJ said: [↑](#)

I don't know about E-bikes being dangerous, take a look at this short clip of a bus driver over here.

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Click to expand...

I wonder what on earth that bus driver was thinking!?! I also wonder what happened before the video to garner such a strong response from that clearly crazy bus driver!! I also drive very defensively. I'm moving at the rate of traffic most times which would be kind of weird to see from a cars perspective and difficult to respond accordingly.

[James, Feb 23, 2014](#)

[#9](#)



10.

[calvin](#) *Active Member*

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Click to expand...

It looks like he was following/tracking alongside the bus as it tried to pull away from him. Then the bus driver intentionally pushed him over. What does it look like to you guys?

[calvin, Feb 23, 2014](#)

[#10](#)

[calvin, Feb 23, 2014](#)

[#11](#)



11.

Court Administrator Staff Member

Hey Chandlee, good question here. This topic is important for determining how laws are shaped and also how our [significant others view commuting](#) by electrified bike...

Beijing was one such city in China that outlawed ebikes but ultimately relented, consider this quote [from Wikipedia](#):

Electric bicycles were banned in some areas of Beijing from August 2002 to January 2006 due to concerns over environmental, safety and city image issues. Beijing has re-allowed use of approved electric bicycles as of January 4, 2006. Some cities in China still ban electric bikes.

In answer to your questions:

1. Yes ebikes are dangerous, more dangerous than regular bikes or walking. They add power to an inherently unstable machine and contribute to higher speeds which can lead to severe damage in the event of an accident. While the risk of riding an electric bike may be great, the absolute of not adopting sustainable means of transportation (to our environment and our personal health) are far greater.
2. I've been complained at, yelled at and even edged out by cars... I am however, a very aggressive bike rider (and ebike rider). I have yelled back, chased cars and flipped people off on many occasions. At one point, a car accelerated to ram me and then sped by while yelling. The funny thing about his choice was that he got boxed in just one light up due to rush hour traffic. As I leisurely caught up I considered using my U-lock to smash his window and then ride away. I realized however that he was likely on his way to a job he hated, suffering through traffic and congestion that, ironically, he was actually contributing to while I was getting exercise and passing everyone. I decided to just keep on going and forgive the guy. Who am I to judge anyway, I tried to let my ego go.
3. Sure, ebikes will encounter some issues but I think the environmental, economic and social pressure for sustainable and affordable transport will quash them. It may take some doing, maybe our laws about top speed or power will come to resemble the EU or maybe a lot of bikers will just get tickets. Life finds a way as this photo might suggest



[Court, Feb 24, 2014](#)

[#12](#)

[Electric Bike Specialists](#) likes this.



12.

George S. Well-Known Member

Electric Bike Specialists said: [↑](#)

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Click to expand...

So, it turns out 12% of bicyclists in Toronto want ebikes in the bike lanes.

<http://www.treehugger.com/bikes/sho...-allowed-bike-lanes-they-are-now-toronto.html>

[George S., Feb 24, 2014](#)

[#13](#)



13.

Brambor *Well-Known Member*

The article carries photographs of actual 'scooter like' vehicles (moped like) than actual pedelec bicycles. It's hard to understand the extent of the survey question to surmise what the 12% bikers were envisioning behind the label of the electric vehicle in question. I'd say the article is a little bit misleading to the pedal assist electric bicycle enthusiast.

Also, the pedal assisted e-bikes without throttle don't blast around at high speeds all the time as they could with a throttle. You still have to pedal faster and use gears to achieve the high speed. I can't believe it should be a huge difference mixing commuter bicycles with bikes like Haibike Touring, Stromer, Eflow or similar. You'd have to be a total lunatic riding in a biking lane with other bikers to just blast into them. The slower traffic and congestion in a bike lane will slow you down. You might accelerate where appropriate but otherwise you'll morph in with the dominant flow.

Last edited: Feb 24, 2014

[Brambor, Feb 24, 2014](#)

[#14](#)

[Electric Bike Specialists](#) likes this.



14.

George S. *Well-Known Member*

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Brambor,

It's pretty clear the cyclists (often referred to as "Lycras" on endless-sphere) hate the electric scooters, but they don't like the ebikes either. Twelve percent is a tiny number.

Pedal assist is the European approach, but it certainly doesn't limit speed. Bikes versus ebike is the difference between people going 10 mph and other people with the potential to go double that. Pedal assist does not change weight, either. And the weight matters, well, a ton. I picked up [a Stromer](#) on Saturday. I don't want that sucker hitting me. But all ebikes are double the weight of a regular cycle, and they are all, by definition, faster. Any way you slice it there are two sources of power versus one.

I see trouble ahead if the ebike community isn't part of the regular bike community.

Best,
George

[George S., Feb 24, 2014](#)

[#15](#)



15.

[Brambor](#) *Well-Known Member*

I agree with you that the Lycras seem to be no big fans of any bicycle that is faster than their racing bike and on which the biker seems to be exerting less effort than they are. Maybe they need counseling.

[Brambor, Feb 24, 2014](#)

[#16](#)

[EddieJ](#) likes this.



16.

Dave *Active Member*

I was passed by a Lycra wearing guy on a regular road bike yesterday. I was doing 18mph. He didn't seem to mind a bit, although I doubt he knew what I was riding.

Dave, Feb 24, 2014

#17



17.

James *Well-Known Member*

I think people in general are resistant to change. They certainly resist more to something they don't understand! That's why I think it'll be important for the industry as a whole to start educating people and governments what we have here! If companies like Specialized and BMC with their worldwide marketing reach can quickly educate people on the positives that ebikes can bring to their lives, then I believe it'll be a much easier battle to fight.

James, Feb 24, 2014

#18

Chris Nolte, Ravi Kempaiah and Electric Bike Specialists like this.



18.

Ravi Kempaiah *Well-Known Member*

Some relevant images here. Shows the space occupied by **Cars vs. Bus vs. Bicycles** for transporting a fixed number of people. A bus may be the most compact way but for that, everybody has to sync their timings to start at the same time and so health benefits that is

inherent in biking.



The first image is from the [Cycling Promotion fund](#) in Australia and the second is from the Muenster Planning Office, taken in 2001. It had a caption that read "Amount of space required to transport the same number of passengers by car, bus or bicycle." and I've seen this pop up on social media sites recently.

[Ravi Kempaiah](#), [Feb 25, 2014](#)

[#19](#)

[calvin](#), [Court](#), [Electric Bike Specialists](#) and [1 other person](#) like this.



19.

[calvin](#) *Active Member*

Thanks for the time you took to get these pics. Obviously the cars are the big losers here, if the least amount of space taken up is the criteria of excellence.

[calvin](#), [Feb 25, 2014](#)

[#20](#)