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## AB 1557: Clarifying E-Bike Safety and Putting Youth First

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Electric bicycles have become an increasingly popular transportation choice for young people across California, providing independence, affordability, and mobility. At the same time, rising e-bike-related injuries and confusion over device classifications highlight the need for enhanced policy and more rigorous enforcement. A recent [CAYC blog](#) noted that many safety problems attributed to “e-bikes” are actually connected to higher-powered devices falling outside current legal definitions, and that youth perspectives were missing from earlier analyses of e-bike safety data.

Assembly Bill 1557, introduced on January 8, 2026, by Assemblymember Diane Papan, represents an important step toward closing that gap. The bill strengthens California’s definition of an electric bicycle in the Vehicle Code by clarifying that an e-bike must have fully operable pedals and an electric motor that is not capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power. By focusing on motor capability rather than marketing language, AB 1557 aims to close loopholes that have allowed high-powered vehicles to be sold and used like bicycles, even when they function more like mopeds.

Under the bill:

- Devices meeting the clarified definition continue to be treated as e-bikes
- Devices capable of exceeding the 750-watt threshold would no longer qualify as e-bikes and could instead be regulated under existing motor-vehicle categories, which have appropriate safety requirements such as licensing, registration,

insurance, and operating restrictions

AB 1557 does not create new penalties. Instead, it provides clear standards that improve enforcement by allowing law enforcement and local officials to rely on a solid legal definition when addressing unsafe riding, illegal modifications, or vehicles operating in prohibited spaces.

A key strength of AB 1557 is that it also guides manufacturers and retailers to ensure that products sold as e-bikes in California actually meet the state's legal definition. Companies that misrepresent higher-powered vehicles may be subject to existing enforcement actions under California's consumer protection and vehicle laws. This clarity protects young riders and supports responsible businesses.

CAYC has been engaged in this issue for almost a year now, including collaboration with Assemblymember Papan's office and participation in the 2025 CAYC Virtual Fall Youth Summit panel on youth e-bike safety alongside experts and commissioners from across the state. Our earlier blog also made clear that youth voices must be part of the conversation about safety norms, helmet use, and risk perception.

AB 1557 reflects what is possible when youth-centered advocacy and legislative leadership work together. CAYC applauds Assemblymember Papan for her proactive, prevention-focused approach to transportation safety and for elevating the needs and insights of young Californians. We look forward to continuing to work with policymakers who recognize that youth participation strengthens policy outcomes to keep young Californians safe.

Image Credit: [High Power Cycles](#)

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