

## South Carolina Electric Bicycle (E-Bike) Law

### Purpose

This guide explains how electric bicycles (e-bikes) are regulated under South Carolina law and highlights additional local considerations within the Town of Bluffton. It is intended for riders, parents, residents, and visitors.

### IMPORTANT: Pedals Are Required

To be legally considered an e-bike in South Carolina, the bicycle **MUST** have fully operable pedals. If a bike does not have working pedals, it is not an e-bike under state law and may be classified as a moped or motor vehicle.

### What Is an E-Bike in South Carolina?

An electric-assist bicycle is a bicycle with fully operable pedals and an electric motor that provides assistance only within limits set by South Carolina law.

### Legal Requirements

- Fully operable pedals
- Electric motor rated at 750 watts or less
- Motor assistance stops at 20 miles per hour
- Motor disengages when braking or pedaling stops
- Permanent manufacturer label showing motor wattage and maximum assisted speed

### Does Motor Wattage Change the Rules?

No. South Carolina law uses a single cutoff. Any e-bike with a motor rated at 750 watts or less is treated the same as a traditional bicycle. There are no separate rules for lower-powered e-bikes.

### Motors Over 750 Watts

If an electric motor exceeds 750 watts, the bicycle is no longer legally considered an e-bike. It may be classified as a moped or motor vehicle, which can require licensing, registration, insurance, and may prohibit use on bike paths, sidewalks, or shared-use trails.

### Licensing, Registration, and Insurance

- No driver's license required
- No vehicle registration required
- No insurance required

### Where You Can Ride

E-bikes may be operated wherever bicycles are allowed, including roads, bike lanes, and shared-use paths, unless restricted by local ordinance.

## **Helmet and Age Rules**

South Carolina does not set a statewide age requirement specifically for e-bikes. Existing bicycle helmet laws for children still apply. Local governments may adopt additional safety rules.

## **Town of Bluffton – Local Rules and Expectations**

Within the Town of Bluffton, e-bikes that meet South Carolina's legal definition are generally treated the same as traditional bicycles. Riders should be aware of the following local expectations:

- E-bikes must yield to pedestrians on shared-use paths and sidewalks
- Riders should operate at safe speeds appropriate for pedestrian areas
- E-bikes may be restricted in certain locations, special events, or crowded areas
- Failure to operate safely may result in enforcement action under local ordinances

Local rules may change and may vary by location. Riders are encouraged to follow posted signage and town guidance.

## **Key Takeaway**

750 watts or less: treated as a bicycle

More than 750 watts or without pedals: not considered an e-bike under South Carolina law

This document is for general information purposes and reflects South Carolina state law and Town of Bluffton guidance. Local ordinances may impose additional restrictions.