



## MEDICINE WHEEL TRAIL ADVOCATES

Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates (MWTAs) are mountain bikers who build, share and protect inspiring trail experiences. We are a 501c3 nonprofit with a vision to create a world class network of mountain bike trails in the Pikes Peak Region. Since 1991, MWTAs has advocated for, created, and maintained multi-use trails and encouraged safe shared use of them.

Electric bicycles, or eBikes, are becoming commonplace in today's world, as interest in personal mobility has grown, accelerated by recent advances in battery, motor and controller technology. eBikes are nearly universally seen as a way to reduce environmental impact by replacing car trips. Related benefits can include reduced traffic congestion, reduced road maintenance costs, improved public health, better utilization of bike lanes and other bike infrastructure, and the economic benefits that a cycling-friendly environment can bring to a community. MWTAs wholeheartedly supports eBike use on roads for these reasons.

In the last few years we've also seen this technology applied to mountain bikes (eMTBs), and interest in using them on singletrack trails has grown. Today, trails in Cheyenne Mountain State Park and throughout the motorized trail network allow eMTB use. But a large portion of our trails lie on public property managed by COS Parks, and today are designated non-motorized and therefore off-limits to eMTBs. Despite this, in part due to a lack of information / preponderance of misinformation, MWTAs has observed a significant increase in use of eMTBs on our non-motorized singletrack trails.

Requests for expansion of access for eMTBs are increasing, and Parks staff have already stated a strong interest to consider eMTB use on our trails. While MWTAs isn't in a position to direct public policy, we do have a role as champion for both the recreational use of trails AND for their preservation. Because of our mission and our expertise, MWTAs is well positioned to help steer this discussion.

Why is this topic a big deal? Consider this: Any change in policy to expand eMTB access on non-motorized trails represents a potential change to the established community vision of the master plan for every park and open space in the Parks system. This is a major change in use that will have impacts on all users, not just riders of eBikes. It will also have an impact on the trails themselves, as new users are introduced to trail riding, and existing users become able to travel further in the same amount of time.

Earlier this year MWTAs conducted a survey that has helped us make some recommendations around the issue. We received a wide range of opinions and learned that in COS, like everywhere else in the country, there are strong opinions on both sides. Regardless of where you stand on ebikes, they exist and are becoming more popular in our world and on our local trails. We are pleased that Parks has initiated a public input process around the topic. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the issue, and share your thoughts with city parks. We'd be glad if you shared them with MWTAs also, [info@medwheel.org](mailto:info@medwheel.org).

It is MWTA's position that a consideration of allowing eMTBs should adhere to these guidelines:

- Any change in policy must continue to classify and regulate eMTBs **as a class of vehicle separate** from human powered bikes.
- Any expansion of eMTB access on singletrack trails should take a careful, incremental approach (starting with a few trails, and including a mechanism to assess impacts and adjust as necessary), and not a blanket change to allow eMTBs on all trails.
- Any expansion of eMTBs access on trails should consider class 1 pedal assist (not throttle activated) ebikes ONLY. Among the wide range of electric vehicles available, these most closely resemble the riding experience of human powered bikes.
- We suggest that any expansion of eMTBs access on trails be accompanied by an education program - supported by Parks staff, Bike Shops, Trail use organizations, Friends groups, and other stakeholders. This education program should highlight appropriate usage for ALL trail users, not just eMTBs.

For more information about eMTBs, please see the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)'s [position](#):

- **IMBA's eMTB position (updated 2019):** *Access to natural surface trails for traditional non-motorized mountain bikes is critical to the future of our sport. As technologies evolve, we understand the need to examine access for Class 1 eMTBs and the unique characteristics they possess compared to traditional mountain bikes. We support trail access for Class 1 eMTBs and support shared use on trails as long as access is not lost or impeded for traditional mountain bikes. IMBA recommends Class 1 eMTBs be managed independently from traditional mountain bikes and we encourage land managers to develop separate regulations. IMBA will continue to engage all stakeholders on this issue in an effort to reach outcomes that best suit all users.*

The MWTA position is consistent with IMBA's, and provides a roadmap for development of an appropriate local policy around how and where eMTBs should be used in the Pikes Peak region.

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MWTA October 14 2020