



MEMO From the Office of the Town Manager

To: Colchester Selectboard

From: Ruby Tetrick, Communications Coordinator

Date: September 17, 2025

Re: State Laws and Town Ordinances Surrounding Motor-Driven Cycles and Electric Bicycles

Background: With the introduction of more advanced and high-powered motor-driven cycles and electric bicycles, we would like to take this opportunity to clear up some confusion that has arisen regarding these vehicles.

Motor-Driven Cycles: Motor-driven cycles are defined as motor powered vehicles equipped with a power source providing a maximum of two brake horsepower and having a maximum piston or rotor displacement of 50 cubic centimeters if a combustion engine is used. Motor-driven cycles do not have pedals and can reach speeds up to 30 mph.

Under Vermont State Statute, motor-driven cycles are considered motor vehicles and thus have all the same requirements as motor vehicles. This means motor-driven cycles and operators of motor-driven cycles must:

- Be registered <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/007/00364a>
- Carry insurance <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/011/00800>
- Be licensed drivers of at least 16 years of age
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/009/00601>

When operating these vehicles on public roads, riders must obey the laws listed above and the rules of the road.

Electric Bicycles: We have also seen, as is true all over the world, a significant increase in the usage of electric bicycles. Electric bicycles are defined as: a bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals, a saddle or seat for the rider, and an electric motor of less than 750 watts that meets the requirements of one of the following three classes:

- (i) "Class 1 electric bicycle" means an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.
- (ii) "Class 2 electric bicycle" means an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.
- (iii) "Class 3 electric bicycle" means an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide assistance when the

bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour.

These bicycles also have specific rules and regulations surrounding them, mostly regarding class 3 electric bicycles. Under Vermont State law, class 3 electric bicycles shall be equipped with a speedometer that displays the speed of the bicycle in miles per hour. Operators of class 3 electric bicycles must be over the age of 16. State law permits the operation of electric bicycles in places where bicycles are allowed including highways, bicycle lanes, and multi-use paths. Other additional laws regarding electric bicycles can be found here:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/013/01136a>

Town Ordinance: Operators of these modes of transportation also must follow Town Ordinances. Section 9-46 lay out regulations for motor-vehicles and bicycles travelling within the Town. Section 9-46 prohibits the use of motorized vehicles of all kinds and descriptions from driving on Colchester Recreation paths except in specific circumstances denoted in the Ordinance. Section 9-46 also prohibits the racing of bicycles on recreation paths.

Town Ordinance requires all users of recreational paths to yield to pedestrian users of the path, travel at safe speeds, and obey all applicable traffic rules and regulations. Section 9-46 of the Town Ordinance can be found here: https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=Colchc09&path=Colchester_Code%2CColchc09%2C

As is true with the operation of any motor vehicle or bicycle, we urge operators to be alert and aware of their surroundings. Following the rules of the road will not only keep yourself safe but also protect the lives of others.