

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments E-Bikes Report

April 2018



Special thanks to



Photo from the Post Independent

NWCCOG E-Bikes Report



The narratives and data in this flyer were gathered from among the NWCCOG membership, from a mini-workshop at the March 22 Council meeting and from a e-bike survey of the NWCCOG region, as well as from municipalities responding to a CML list-serve request from Sam Mamet. The survey included participation from Colorado Association of Ski Towns members thanks to Margaret Bowes. I am appreciative for all the input. The flyer, the survey and the accumulated documents are intended to be resources for any jurisdiction making policy decisions on this topic.

The impetus for looking at e-bikes is that it is new technology with an unsettled policy framework. Multiple public engagement efforts are currently underway across the NWCCOG region on the topic. So it was no surprise that NWCCOG membership requested that we “do something on e-bikes.” Amazing research is performed internally by municipal or county staffers to prepare a governing body for a decision. That work rarely is leveraged by other communities. To address that, we have gathered on the NWCCOG website a library of staff memos and ordinances related to e-bikes that were shared with us; many are linked directly through this document.

Electric bikes look increasingly like their pedal-power-only siblings, but a reserve of power rapidly expands how riders view opportunities for commuting, and enhances their ability to access recreational amenities. E-bikes are maturing at a time that Baby-Boomers, a powerful recreation sector demographic are exploring ways to continue active lifestyles. E-bikes allow riders to go further, faster than most otherwise could. For some of us of a certain age in moderate shape, an e-bike provides the throttle of youth on a sleek fitness platform allowing for rides that we made 20 years ago. They are not going away, and in fact, public “management” or regulation of various personal mobility technologies have only just begun, see the last article in this on dockless bike share programs for a taste of upcoming disruption.

Most concerns about e-bike use center on differential speeds. It is a hot enough topic that the issue was addressed by the State Legislature with HB 17-1151, defining e-bikes as non-motorized and establishing three classes. GOCO has not taken an official position on e-bikes, but federal agencies have. Because of the growing network of regional trail systems across the region in recent years, the question of regulatory alignment across jurisdictions makes e-bikes a regional issue. Some communities are also recognizing e-bikes as another tool in the transportation and sustainability toolbox.

It has been a pleasure compiling this document, and I want to apologize for any community whose story was left untold. Help us correct that by sharing your story.

Jon Stavney
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NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

NWCCOG and CAST Member Survey on E-bikes

Thanks to jurisdictions responding to our E-bike survey in March. The results are available in PPT format on our website for your use. We are leaving it open until this flyer has been distributed to get even broader input, the link to the survey is [HERE](#).

General takeaways as of March 2018 include:

- ◆ Two thirds of responding jurisdictions currently regulate e-bikes or are considering it
- ◆ All responding as regulators do so on rec paths, and most do on soft surface paths, on specific trails and differentiate between Class 1, 2 and 3 bikes
- ◆ Nearly 40% had an extended engagement process, while 25% acted administratively
- ◆ All responded because of concern about incidents, while 67% of respondents did not actually think e-bikes were a significant safety concern (staff, not public)
- ◆ 86% are not fielding negative reports about e-bike use
- ◆ 83% see e-bikes as an important tool in meeting climate action or sustainability goals
- ◆ 89% have regional trails where regulation would involve multiple entities
- ◆ 89% of respondents saw multiple entities as “a challenge for e-bike users”
- ◆ 36% of responding jurisdictions not regulating are not because e-bikes have not emerged as an issue of concern
- ◆ 38% of respondents said they allowed ATVs on municipal streets

The survey results can be found [HERE](#).

A list of staff contacts of those entities responding

- ◆ Brandy Reitter, Town Manager, Town of Eagle, brandy.reitter@townofeagle.org
- ◆ Craig Robinson, Parks and Recreation, City of Steamboat Springs, crobinson@steamboatsprings.net
- ◆ Watkins Fulk-Gray, Staff Planner, Town of Basalt, watkins.fulkgray@basalt.net
- ◆ Andy Worline, Parks and Trails Director and David Peckler, Transportation Director
- ◆ John Dresser, Town attorney, Town of Snowmass Village, jdresser@tosv.com
- ◆ Gary Tennenbaum, Pitkin County, gary.tennenbaum@pitkincounty.com
- ◆ Brian Schilling, Pathways and Trails Coordinator, Town of Jackson and Teton County, bschilling@tetoncountywy.gov
- ◆ Tanya Allen, Transportation Manager, City of Glenwood Springs; tanya.allen@cogs.us
- ◆ Tom Carolosello, EVRPD Executive Director, tomc@evrpd.com
- ◆ Greg Muhonen, Public Works Director, Town of Estes Park, gmuhonen@estes.org
- ◆ Frank Lancaster, Town Administrator, Town of Estes Park, flancaster@estes.org
- ◆ Logan Jones, Trails and Open Space Coordinator, Park City, UT, logan.jones@parkcity.org
- ◆ Cathy Metz, Parks and Recreation Director, City of Durango, 970-375-7329
- ◆ Jim White, Town Manager, Town of Grand Lake, glmanager@townofgrandlake.com

Thanks as of March 2018 to the following entities responding to the e-bike survey:

Colorado Association of Ski Town members (outside NWCCOG region) responding including: Silverthorne, Park City Municipal Corporation, City of Durango, Estes Park, Teton County Wyoming, Gunnison County

NWCCOG member jurisdictions responding including: Town of Grand Lake, City of Glenwood Springs, Dillon, Eagle County, Snowmass Village, Pitkin County, Town of Blue River, Basalt, Kremmling, City of Steamboat Springs, Town of Eagle. (a couple entities had multiple responses from different departments).



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Glenwood Springs: It takes a planned crisis to learn E-bikes are just fine

When the City of Glenwood Springs was preparing for a 95-day shutdown of the Grand Avenue Bridge in 2017, the directive to Tanya Allen, Transportation Manager for the City, was to work with other city staff to reduce peak hour traffic by 35%. Grand Avenue is the beginning of Highway 82, the major North-South access point to the entire Roaring Fork Valley. Speaking at the March 22 NWCCOG Council meeting “On the Role of E-Bikes in Community Mobility,” Allen said the challenge was treated internally as “incident planning and management,” and one of the first questions asked was how to “encourage people to make bicycling part of their solution?”

As a planner who works in an engineering department, to Allen, e-bikes were just part of a comprehensive mobility plan with the objective to “maximize uses” that increased the diversion of traffic from the road. Preserving the recreation uses” on shared trails was a second value. Allen said, “We could not just create bicycle superhighways” in regard to treating e-bikes separately.

First, Glenwood had to pass an ordinance for the City Manager to “suspend some code elements” by administrative order—after all, the closure created a major incident ([staff memo](#)). Then they set about a campaign, working with the local cycling community, focusing on bike etiquette, and training trail ambassadors starting with a [press release](#). Allen said, “we upgraded paths, creating some new connections. Planning for bikes was a big part of the investment.”

Side by side with the CDOT Grand Avenue Bridge Detour map, the City published a new Bike Routes Map that included sample travel times, rules for safe riding and a color-coded legend of what kind of condition to expect on the route, from sidewalk, multi-use trail to marked bike lane. They also deployed a “Happy Trails” campaign that was supported by yellow-vested ambassadors who gave advice and collected data, supplementing the police force which was busy managing the detour route and critical pinch points between pedestrians and vehicles.



Yellow-vested ambassadors gave advice and supplemented police force as part of the “Happy Trails” campaign. (photo from Glenwood Springs Post Independent)

NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

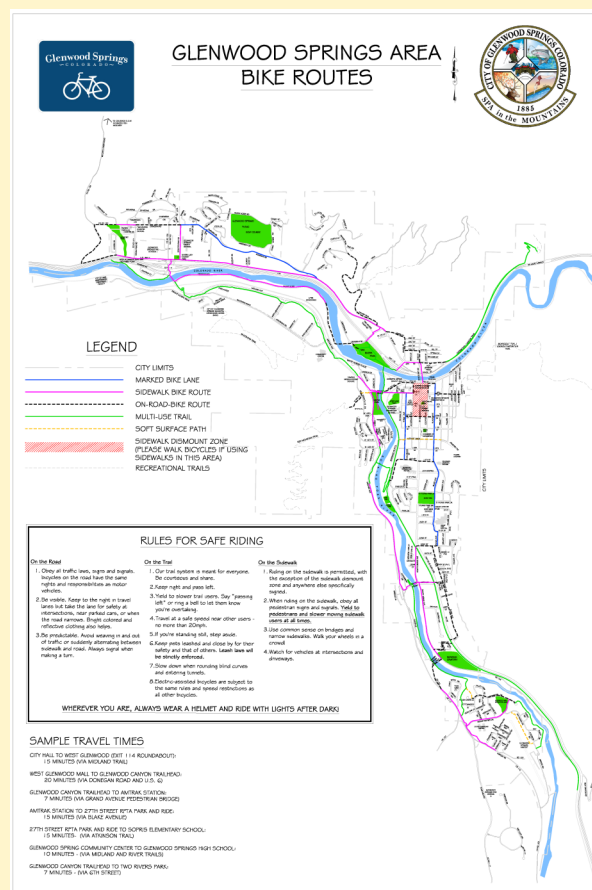
Glenwood Springs: It takes a planned crisis to learn E-bikes are just fine

Asked at the NWCCOG meeting about other devices like e-skateboards, Segways or electric scooters, Allen was quick to respond, “we shaped the discussion by being out in front to answer questions about other devices,” said Allen and a guiding principle was that “even without the e-part, it is still a bicycle.” In other words, they diplomatically did not support, encourage or prohibit other devices.

What did the City learn during their 95-day experiment? One contractor boldly decided to purchase a fleet of 29 bikes as part of their workforce commute ([read article here](#)). The City learned that there was limited negative public reaction to e-bikes, and that differential speeds were a common issue across devices. They also learned that there was an interest in regional solutions. To that end, Allen noted that she was now working with Angela Henderson, her counterpart at RFTA on public engagement on the Rio Grande Trail which extends from Glenwood to Aspen. That public engagement is underway ([read article here](#)).

While Glenwood was able to suspend some legal barriers to manage a 95-day incident, other communities are not able to do so to test e-bike technology with the privilege of a planned crisis. Some places are using pilot programs (see next story). Patti Clapper, Pitkin County commissioner noted that “Pitkin does not have rangers on the trails.” Bob Sirkus, Town of Snowmass Village Council member who openly complimented Glenwoods’ management of the closure at the NWCCOG meeting added that the Town of Snowmass Village “has a huge problem. Our entire trail system is on easements. We are using GIS, but have yet to find one trail that we could use with e-bikes in a clean way.”

As for Glenwood Springs, increased number of folks trying different commuting habits, many of them on e-bikes, produced very positive anecdotal feedback. More than a few riders, “especially older folks or those challenged by topography” according to Allen, said that the experience of trying an e-bike “changed my life.” The City of Glenwood Springs learned by doing with a Grand Experiment. Perhaps some habits broken, and new patterns created will endure like the new connection infrastructure.



[Link to map on website](#)



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Piloting as a Public Engagement and an E-bike normalizing tool

Vail adopted a “trial season” of use on their recreation path system in December 2017 for this summer, with the major caveat that USFS is not allowing e-bikes on the Vail Pass recreation path which crosses Federal lands. This past month, Vail clarified through ordinance that Electric Assisted Bicycles are permitted on town paths, with the exception of a number of high-profile prohibited areas ([read article here](#)). [The ordinance](#) also limits commercial enterprises of Electronic Personal Assistive Mobility Devices (EPMAMDs – including Segways) to one permit and limits it to 10 person groups ([staff report](#)). The move was picked up by CBS news in February. Aspen is taking the same approach on an ambitious scale with their Aspen Mobility Lab which will be gathering baseline data this summer for a laundry list of transportation initiatives next summer. Summit County is currently in a public comment period with staff anticipating making recommendations to the BOCC in April ([Summit County e-bike webpage](#)).

The City of Boulder utilized a pilot project as their public engagement tool ([link to ordinance](#)). The ordinance and staff white paper are on the NWCCOG website. Marni Ratzel, whose title was Bike and Pedestrian Planner for the City of Boulder for 15 years shared the Boulder saga from 2002 until now with NWCCOG. The issue that brought in over 300 citizen comments was put to rest by utilizing a pilot period in ***which the shared use issues eventually became “a complete non-issue”*** in her words. There are four documents on the NWCCOG website from the City of Boulder including the staff reports on the pilot and ordinances.

It will be interesting what feedback comes from “trial seasons”, “pilots”, and “Mobility Labs.” At the March NWCCOG Council meeting Heather Sloop of the Steamboat Springs City Council lamented that Steamboat had also run a pilot for e-bikes, but that a lack of a clear public feedback tool prevented her from feeling conclusive about the experiment. This underscored the challenge facing local leaders because, even with all the data, with carefully cultivated feedback and metrics (if it is structured to be gathered), policies such as how to manage e-bikes are still a legislative question for local officials and subject to wide discretion. The House Bill in 2017, while defining e-bikes created some sideboards for communities that want to wait and see, and also made sure that jurisdictions which wanted to regulate had a framework to do so ([read HB 17-1151 here](#)).



"The issue that brought in over 300 citizen comments was put to rest by utilizing a pilot period in which the shared use issues eventually became a complete non-issue."

***Marni Ratzel,
Bike and Pedestrian Planner,
City of Boulder***



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

NWCCOG Hosts “Mini-Workshop” on E-bikes

NWCCOG hosted a “mini-workshop” on E-bikes during the March 22nd Council meeting. Research for this flyer revealed just how many different departments were running point on the topic for their respective jurisdictions which spoke to how many sectors the topic touches, including

- ◆ Several town managers and town attorneys
- ◆ A trails committee in Estes Park
- ◆ [Community Development Department in Summit County](#) , and planning department in Basalt
- ◆ Open Space in Crested Butte, Pitkin County and Park City
- ◆ Transportation in Glenwood Springs
- ◆ Parks and Recreation Districts/Departments in Durango, Steamboat Springs
- ◆ Pathways and Trails Coordinator for Town of Jackson & Teton County, Snowmass Village



Presenting at the NWCCOG “mini-workshop,” Rob Schoeber, Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Grand Junction was one of the first to contact NWCCOG and voice outright enthusiasm for e-bikes. This might have had something to do with being a Parks and Rec person recently being put forward as the staff point person in advising the Grand Junction City Council about e-bikes on the 21 miles of Riverfront, Ridges and Urban Trails managed by his office. His [staff report](#) and the [GJ ordinance](#) are on our website. With all of the many worries about the new technology, NWCCOG tends to think that GJ’s full embrace of e-bikes, even in the face of many reluctant partnering agencies, especially on regional trails will eventually prove the norm. From a political perspective, it was apparent that Schoeber and GJ staff had their finger on the throttle on this topic.

Schoeber presented to the NWCCOG Council on March 22nd, noting that Grand Junction was officially supporting e-bikes, though the 5 other jurisdictions along the Riverfront trail from Palisade to Loma were “not all in concert” on e-bike use. He did note that an e-bike “is a typical bicycle” and difficult to visually discern from flesh-and-blood powered counterparts, especially on trails that have no scheduled enforcement. GJ adopted the ordinance on February 21, 2018, over objections from their own Riverfront Commission, allowing use of Class 1 and 2 e-bikes on “city trails.” From a Parks and Recreation perspective, Schoeber sees only upside to e-bikes being a tool to get more people out recreating and enjoying all the assets that his department manages. Trails are resources the city has invested in through acquiring land, seeking grants and building infrastructure. One early concern of his was that Great Outdoors Colorado at one point appeared to be considering a hard line on e-bikes not being allowed on any project funded by GOCO , but he said that GOCO appears to have “backed off” of this position, though it has not made a public statement on the matter.

In question and answer with Schoeber at the NWCCOG meeting it was noted that Fruita, with the Kokopelli trail system which begins in town and extends onto BLM property, as the poster community for mountain biking in Colorado (apologies to Eagle, Crested Butte, Winter Park, Steamboat Springs and other biker branded communities) has additional layers of challenges when it comes to e-bikes. As it was stated by a NWCCOG member, with “visitors coming from out of state expecting to be able to use e-bikes, which may be the only bikes they brought with them across 1000 miles to make the pilgrimage, and most town trails linking to the federally managed trail system, it “creates a tourism component” (to put it lightly) to the current lack of alignment across jurisdictions on the issue. My take on that, good luck to the handful of public lands enforcement folks who have a lot of other issues on their minds



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Single Track and E-bikes

This flyer will not do justice to this topic. We did receive some documents from the White River National Forest on the topic include the [local internal notes on e-bikes](#) and the [Washington Office Memo](#) on the topic. With regard to soft paths which have become so important as recreation and economic development tools to most resort communities, some are following USFS and taking a hard line on e-bike use to protect their single track. Snowmass Village banned e-bikes this past summer ([read article here](#)). Hilary Henry, Open Space and Creative District Coordinator for the Town of Crested Butte said the town is “working to prohibit e-bikes on all of our natural surface, single-track trails,” citing the need for consistency and “edge matching” with BLM and USFS. That larger question is being debated at a national level by such entities as IMBA which divided the membership in 2017 by considering a push to allow mountain bikes in wilderness areas. As of December 2017, IMBA backed off on that position ([read article here](#)). With the current administration opening many once closed questions about use of Public Lands, the e-bike question with regard to Federal management is likely not yet settled.



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Aspen Mobility Lab

Aspen, like The City of Glenwood Springs is looking at e-bikes primarily as a tool to divert traffic from their highly congested, under-parked historic downtown. Barry Crook, City of Aspen Assistant Manager in a recent conversation with NWCCOG noted that Aspen staff is looking at many options through the Aspen Mobility Lab which is the mechanism for experimenting, gathering data and input and moving towards transportation solution.

He noted that Aspen (staff at least) “is all in on e-bikes,” noting that the main issue is not the device but that “in my experience speed is speed, and speed is the issue.” He did tip his hat by saying, Aspen staff “has a notion to put 200 – 300 e-bikes into a program that would lease to own, rent and allow use of bikes.” Crook also noted that utilizing precious parking spaces for bike parking of any type has been a “lead balloon” with merchants. It will be interesting to see if a city’s enthusiasm for a solution gets ahead of the public acceptance curve.

Aspen is taking an all-options approach to diverting car users to transit and bike shares. In fact, it is in the early stages this year of one of the most ambitious and innovative pilot programs and experiments in the nation. The City of Aspen has embarked this spring on an effort to “draw on lessons from select pilot programs in over 25 cities worldwide and will be the most advanced community-wide pilot program executed to date,” according to a [December 2017 Memo](#) from Ashley Perl, Climate Action Manager for the City of Aspen. The City issued RFPs for six different categories of Bicycle innovations (including dockless, electric specialty bike share programs as well as bike lease programs), and three Transit related categories including on-demand, specialty fixed route and micro-transit services. Stay tuned for the results of this summer’s 3-month pilot program which is at the heart of the Mobility Lab concept. Crook clarified that this summer only baseline data will be gathered, and that although the project had intended to share results at a Summit in November of 2018, that this will be a year later since the Summer of 2019 will be when the many experiments in transportation will take place. Should be exciting.



Traffic at the S-curves on Highway 82 in Aspen of cars headed down valley at rush hour on Tuesday. (Aspen Times, 7/27/17)

"We want to provide options, and people can make the choice to be part of the solution. We need to start rethinking the problem of traffic."

**- Ashley Perl, Climate Action Manager,
City of Aspen**

NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

We-Cycle community bike share celebrates 5 years, becomes first FREE bike share in U.S.

The [Aspen Times reported January 31, 2018](#) that “The Town of Basalt has joined the City of Aspen as the first municipalities in the country to take their bike share programs to a no-fare system.” Adjacent Eagle County also is pitching in for a total of \$200,000 to cover the first 30 minutes of a ride for users. The incentive is intended primarily for short point-to-point use. On average 193 people use We-cycle per day, though that can swell to 600 uses per day. In the past 5 years, use has quintupled. Longer use according to Mirte Mallory, Executive Director of We-Cycle is the purview of bike rentals. She notes, “This is really intended to be an extension of a transit program. “

Recognizing the challenge of “last mile” connections more than five years ago when it was one of only 30 bike share programs in the country, We-Cycle, a 501©3 non-profit was founded in Aspen “to foster a more vibrant Aspen by providing safe, reliable, 24/7 bike access between neighborhoods, bus stops and the downtown core” according to its [website](#). Partnering with We-Cycle helps the City of Aspen achieve key goals. There is also a station in Basalt and ambitions to grow. The model up until this year was simple: short term users had 30 minutes to redock the bike while a season pass holder (\$50) also allowed 60 minutes of use. Overtime charges of \$8/hr applied after that. Those overtime fees will increase with the new 30-minute free model. Last year more than 43,856 rides were taken system wide.

The move towards Free usage was a logical one since public entities were footing most of the bill, along with a number of private sponsors each year to sustain the program. Note that We-Cycle does not have an e-bike share program at this point in time.



Pinedale, WY

“This is really intended to be an extension of a transit program. “

**Mirte Mallory,
Executive Director,
We-Cycle**

NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Future Challenge: Dockless Bike Share and Location Based Marketing

Though many bike shares are not yet utilizing e-bikes, there is no reason they will not be in the future. According to consultant Marni Ratzel, who spent 15 years with the City of Boulder as a Bike and Pedestrian planner, global companies Ofo and Mobike, are awash with venture capital, and battling in grand dockless bike share experiments in Seattle, San Diego and Washington D.C. and may be coming to a city near you.

We spoke with Ratzel in a phone interview. She claims dockless bike share companies are the next disruptive innovation for municipalities. Unlike most bike share, dockless programs don't need significant (read "purchased or permitted") real estate for the central stations, nor must they struggle to find and permit satellite docking stations. Like old fashioned bike use, these share programs operate without centralized home bases, so bikes end up on public right-of-way somewhat randomly around town. In many cases the stipulation for use is to leave the bike on public property (not on private property which could create a trespassing issue for the next user). Of course, they can be located anywhere if you have the app. One example I saw at a conference in Aurora this spring was a bike share parked in a suburban neighborhood on the corner of Yost and E 13th Ave. The bike was there by a stop sign—kickstanding right in the road a few feet from the curb. Even if the ROW extended into the grass off the pavement, most users would have no way of knowing that because the neighborhood didn't have sidewalks. I can only imagine what public works thought. OK, for those non-alarmists, in cities with bike racks everywhere, these bikes which are immobilized electronically or utilize an on-board lock system are a lot like privately owned bikes, they are just shared through an app.

Many urban areas and a handful of towns in mountain resort region like Aspen, and Pinedale, Wyoming which has a bike share at their chamber of commerce information center right on main street have made deals with bike share companies to for stations. In Pinedale, the one docking station works great for a visitor to park curbside, rent a bike with a credit card and ride to key locations around town and return to the location near where their car which is parked near the bike station. One station serves all of town quite sufficiently and visitors who have driven many miles get a break.

The new market concept in dockless bikes is also attracting venture capital and is attractive to public entities because it requires ZERO public investment, notes Ratzel. The bike share makes money from location-based marketing. Get a smart phone app with location enabled and a bike with GPS and in tracking your movement, the advertising comes to you based on your location. Hungry, looking for good BBQ? The Chinese based company knows how to ping you to the closest vendor and makes money for connecting your hunger with that vendor and gets you there via the bike!

Mobikes, for instance, reported in mid-2017 raising \$928 million in two years since its founding with more than 100 million users who take advantage of 20 million trips on its 6 million bikes worldwide according to a Fortune Magazine article from July 8, 2017 about the Fortune Brainstorm Tech Conference in Aspen. Marni Ratzel, Transportation Planning Consultant can be reached at marni.ratzel@gmail.com.



NWCCOG E-Bikes Report

Town of Eagle based QuietKat manufactures E-bikes that are more like silent ATVs

Jake Roach and his brother who have a long history of investing in recreation-based tourism saw an opportunity and developed their own e-bike company as an alternative to sportsmen –read hunters-- using “noisy ATVs.” The story showing the business side angle on the patchwork landscape of regulations poses an even greater challenge than off-roading one of their innovative products. It is a great one was recently told in the [Summit Daily News](#).



To add documents to the NWCCOG e-bike library or the website, send attachments to office@nwccog.org.

