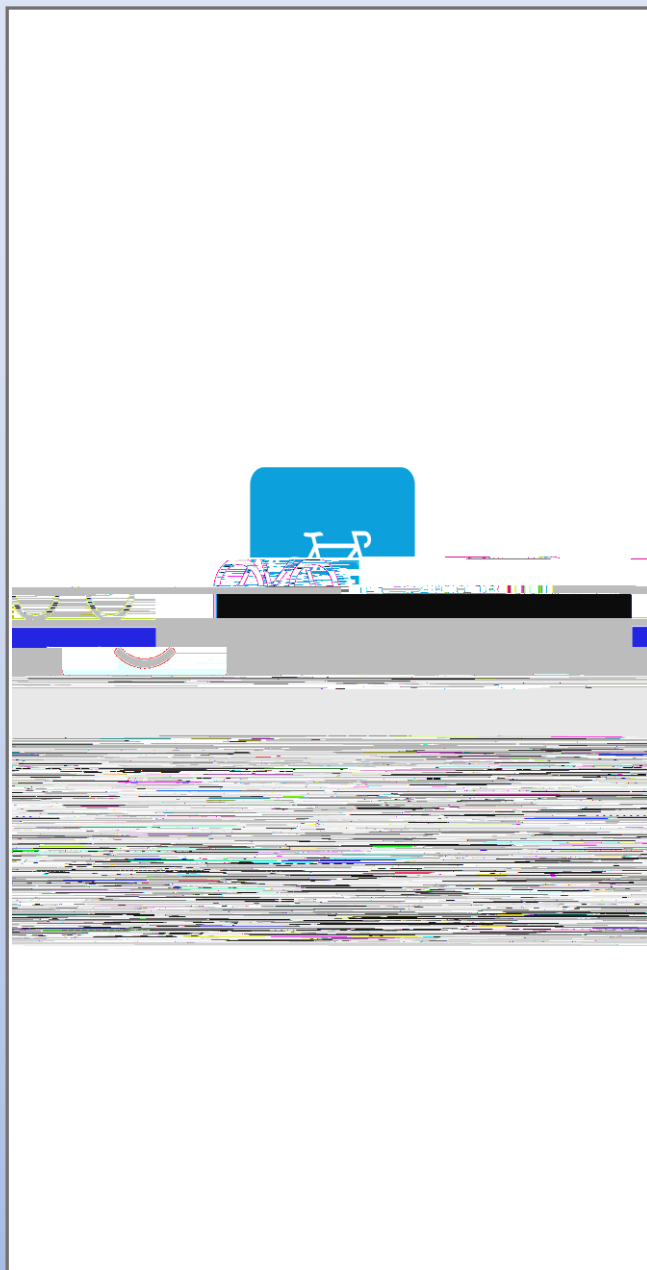


Vermont Electric-Assist Mountain Bike (eMTB) Attitudes and Knowledge Research Report

Produced by the Center for
Rural Studies at the University
of Vermont for People For Bikes

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would like to be contacted for future research participation. All respondents who provided contact information were sent an email providing information about the focus groups and times to sign up. The additional two focus groups were held with a citizen committee responsible for the management of a local multi-use trail network, and with staff from a local mountain bike member organization. Focus groups were conducted remotely using Microsoft teams during early November 2022. Each Focus Group lasted approximately 60-75 minutes and had between 2-13 participants.

Do you have any specific comments about your experiences with user trail etiquette?

Bikers are the most @ many bikes are still coming
Cyclists are the best!!!
I feel like runners and walkers are less aware of trail etiquette when it comes to giving way to faster person. Who gets right of way on uphill.
I use the trails nearly every day Monday through Friday to hike with my dogs and occasionally some people who have
It s always been positive.
K M
Loose dogs not under owners control. Bikers at high speed not yielding or looking for pedestrians
My first time here. Seems great!
Everyone has been so nice!
Overall positive
People are generally very friendly and respectful!
Really think dogs should not be able to run up to me and bark growl etc. Super friendly, feels like a

Safety

Qualitative comments on the preliminary survey indicate a concern that introducing eMTBs on trails will increase risks to the safety of riders and other trail users. Some respondents felt that eMTBs were dangerous because the higher speeds would cause users to travel too fast on descents and injure themselves. Some respondents also commented that with the climbing assist, riders will be able to make it up more challenging ascents and access trails that they are not skilled enough to ride. Others also felt the high speed of eMTBs posed risks to other trail users, specifically citing risks to hikers/walkers and collisions with other riders from eMTBs climbing trails typically ridden downhill.

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downhills, your downhill speed is always going to exceed the speed
the pedal assist helps him get over roots and rocks easier.

If any safety concerns arose from eMTB discussions, it was more from the technical skill it takes to control the bike. It can be challenging to pair the appropriate power with the area of trail you are on, and new users will need to learn to handle these changes.

Do you have any specific comments about the physical impacts to trails at HTF?

I am probably wrong but I feel like electric bike folks have fewer bike skills than human powered bike folks and they fly off trails into bushes more often. They seem less in control
I believe with responsible use and proper trail maintenance no activity is a "negative impact". Trail use is part of maintaining the usability of trails.
E short amount of time, compared to runners/walkers/hikers and human powered bikers.
Moto and quad very bad
There are places where the mountain biking is causing significant erosion of the trail. I don't see how this is sustainable over the long haul.
When mountain bikers stay off the trails when they are wet, there is very little issue. I have seen evidence of much more erosion from motorcycles. I imagine the same would be true for electric bikes, as they are heavier and can go faster.

The physical impacts of eMTBs on trails were relatively uncontested among focus group participants. Most participants felt that comments about eMTBs

Why do you use, or have you used an Electric Assist mountain bike? (Selected comments)

@ @ @
I would like to use an electric assist bike to make mtn biking easier on my body. I have asthma and a couple other chronic illnesses. Over the years mtn biking is increasingly difficult but it brings great joy. E assist bike allows me to continue to enjoy this sport and explore more places.

The accessibility question was the one that elicited the strongest push back among all the focus group questions. e-bike access to only those who require an adaptive option. Multiple reasons were given for this by participants. First, participants noted the difficulty of having to procure a doctor's note proving the necessity of an eMTB. One participant even discussed a negative interaction he had with his doctor regarding the necessity of an eMTB. They note that other trail networks have been faced with challenging circumstances that have forced them to make a decision to require proof of disability.

When asked about having eMTB only trails, participants also provided negative responses. Participants noted that riders often switch to eMTBs so they can continue to ride at the pace of their friends or family members who may be younger or more able-bodied. By designating eMTB to only specific trails, it again excludes the eMTB rider from being able to participate in the group.

General eMTB Perceptions

There was sentiment from some respondents that eMTBs were disruptive to the essence of the sport. Some of this concern seemed to come from a misunderstanding of what Class 1 eMTBs were, and others wanted the sport to not move away from its original form.

Example Quotes:

- "The integrity of the sport. E-bikes are nothing more than electric dirt bikes. Mountain biking should be EARNED via pedal/human power, and e-bikes count as a cheat code (and should be banned on their entirety; both on-road and Mountain)." - Early Results
- "I don't want to see the sport change. I want to see it stay true to its roots." - V\U

How do you think property owners might feel about allowing ebikes on properties?

Participants did describe concern that some property-owners might perceive eMTBs as similar to other types of motorized vehicles. Some property owners that allow mountain bike trails may not have any knowledge of mountain biking at all- making it easier for this type of misperception to occur.

- One of our private landowners asked me about renewing our landowner agreement and they wanted to know about these electric bikes and were very uneducated, they spend no time in the woods. They're not hikers, they're not mountain bikers. They're actually a golfer, so you know, it's really hard to explain what a Class 1E

Participants also described the use of conserved lands where the development of mountain bike trails is part of the agreement to maintain conservation easements, but where language in these easements may already be in place that directly limits or could be interpreted as limiting to eMTBs. Many of these legal agreements would have been put in place well before eMTBs were in existence.

- You know, a lot of a lot of these easements were written before ebikes were even invented. It's not just the landowner that may have issues. The landowner could actually want E bikes on the property, but there could be additional legal interests that are involved that.

How do we address the conceptualization of eMTBs as being the same as motorized vehicles?

Participants described several ways