



Bike Walk Montana Legislative Alert | March 12, 2021 | Vol. 67, Issue 6

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

The 67th Montana State Legislature is back in session and working on both bills transmitted from the other house as well as budget related bills. We are interested in how the Montana Department of Transportation budget may better support active transportation and so will watch that process and have several bills that passed the house that either have been heard in the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee, will be or are on their way to the Senate floor.

HB184 – the bicycle safety bill, passed the House, has been heard in the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee, and is awaiting executive action.

HB281 – revising laws related to ebikes, has been heard and passed by the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee and will go for 2nd reading on the Senate floor soon.

HB306 – revising recreational shuttle laws, passed the House by a 99-1 vote and will be heard by Senate Highways and Transportation Committee next Tuesday, March 16th at 3:00.

Take Action!!!

We hope each of you will take the time to make your views known to the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee or your hometown Senator. You can find them and their emails and phone numbers on our website [here](#) . You still can provide and/or sign up testimony through the testimony portal [here](#) but make sure you sign up by noon the day before a hearing.

Click on the bill number below to go to the bill information,

[HB184](#) We worked on this bill with its sponsor from the very beginning of the session and had hopes that it would finally give us better safe passing definition even while not agreeing, and testifying to that, with its further requirements for equipment and clothing. Senator Theresa Manzella has not proposed amending it even further and you can see her proposed amendments [here](#) .

Particularly with this threat of amendment, we are now opposed to HB184 and urging you to contact the Senate Highways and Transportation members and asking them to kill it.

[HB281](#) – Bike Walk supports the bill as passed in the House and by the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee which passed it 7-6 on March 11. The bill provides state law foundation for ebike management on state, city and county lands. It brings the definition in state law up to national standards. Federal land trails are excluded from this proposed bill and management will not be affected.

The benefit of more riders using shared use trails and bicycle paths helps the overall goal of good walking and bicycling infrastructure. We do not want to see transportation alternatives restricted and this bill ensures ebikes have the same rights as traditional bikes. We do believe that expanding use of ebikes will require attention from our cities and towns and the bill provides a process for allowing local authorities and agencies to restrict ebikes on designated trails. You can see the restrictions and proposed process in Section 4 on page 20 of the bill.

We did communicate with our conservation and trails partners to let them know why we support this bill in its current form. Although we weren't able to reach consensus with them, we will continue supporting locally based and appropriate sharing of trails for all users, whenever possible, and remain as a founding member of the [Montana Trails Coalition](#). It's up to each of us, whether ebiker or traditional bicyclist, to both participate locally and to be courteous and respectful to others.

[HB 306](#) –This bill would exempt recreational shuttle services using 15 passenger or smaller vehicles from burdensome Public Service Commission regulation. HB306 will be heard in the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee, Tuesday March 16 at 3:00 pm. This bill supports our local shuttle services that do so much to help educate, provide local information, and interpret our local areas, as well as give us a ride! Contact members of the [Senate Highways and Transportation Committee](#) here and let them know how you feel.

Bike Walk Montana reached our positions on these and numerous other bills through robust and wide-ranging discussions, including consideration of emails from you, our members. No matter where you stand on these bills, please use this democratic opportunity to let the transportation committees or your local legislator know that bicycle safety and infrastructure are important to you, our kids and Montana. The Senate needs to hear this now! If you haven't made comments yet, let your voice be heard and if you have made comments or testified, we need you even more now. Check our [2021 Legislative Initiatives](#) webpage for how to submit comments and testify.

While you are on the page, you can check our [bill tracker](#) to see the current status of the above bills as well as the many others (school bus safety, parks & trails, funding, etc.) we are tracking.