



Why we can't hit the brakes for e-bikes on trains

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Committee
for
Sydney

bicycle
NSW 



Why we can't hit the brakes when it comes to e-bikes on trains

E-mobility is no longer niche in Sydney. It's a mainstream, growing part of the way our city moves. On ride share bikes alone, there were a grand total of 2,861,860 (almost 3 million) trips in Greater Sydney in the first six months of 2025.

Our 2025 Life in Sydney survey showed e-bikes are becoming a go-to way for getting around. Almost 20% of people in Sydney use them, with uptake surging among Gen Zs where nearly one-third ride e-bikes regularly (32%).

This gives a sense of how transformative e-bikes and e-mobility are in shaping how people move around. Banning e-bikes from trains risks undermining this momentum, and with it, the social, economic and environmental benefits e-mobility delivers.

Beyond commuters, thousands of gig economy workers rely on e-bikes to earn a living. Many travel from Western Sydney into the inner city, and being able to take their bike on the train is what makes their work possible. Without it, they risk loss of income and the local businesses they serve also lose out.

E-bikes are no longer a fringe trend, they're fast becoming a go-to way to get around Sydney.

An immediate pathway forward

To ensure this positive growth isn't stalled, we're calling on the NSW Government to consider the following solutions to continue to allow e-bikes on trains, safely:

1

Implement an exemption for safe, high-quality e-bikes: Allow all major brand bikes that conform to EN15194. This is the current global best practice standard for all elements of a complete e-bike, and it is regularly updated and adopted in most major markets, including for the quality bike brands imported into Australia. However, e-bike modification kits should be banned on trains.

2

Designate first and last carriages for compliant e-bikes: Allocate the first and last carriage on every train and metro for EN15194-compliant e-bikes, with additional fire safety equipment and clear signage. Completely ban charging on trains.

3

Guarantee exemptions for bicycle events: Ensure events such as the Spring Cycle and MS Gong Ride can continue to use train access for participants.

4

Exempt all disabled, less abled and chronically ill people: A critical equity measure to ensure those who rely on e-bikes for mobility, rehabilitation or access to work, healthcare and community life are not unfairly disadvantaged. Many in these groups have limited public transport or safe cycling options, and an exemption would protect their independence and participation.

Why banning e-bikes on trains is an economic, social equity and productivity mistake

1. E-mobility is a productivity booster, banning it puts the brakes on growth

E-bikes are integral to how Sydney works, shops and plays:

- Gig economy lifeline: Over 5,000 delivery riders use trains to travel for work. Removing this option will cut their earning capacity and undermine restaurant and retail operations in dense urban centres.
- First and last mile connections: E-bikes make it possible to reach workplaces, education and services beyond the reach of public transport, particularly in poorly serviced areas on the fringes of Sydney.
- Night-time economy support: A significant portion of e-bike trips occur outside regular work hours, with 22.6% of trips taken between 8 pm and midnight. This trend highlights the role of e-bikes in supporting the night-time economy by providing an alternative mode of transport during non-peak hours when public transportation runs less frequently. By keeping workers and patrons moving, e-bikes are helping to extend economic activity well beyond business hours.
- Boosting local business: People who walk or cycle spend more in local shops than businesses expect – and Saturday is the highest use day for shared e-bikes.

“This ban will be the last straw for many riders. Without the ability to flexibly relocate delivery ebikes to high demand hotspots, there will be very few riders available to serve business and customer demand in higher density areas. People are being encouraged to live in 20-minute neighbourhoods and abandon car ownership. This is not viable without a good supply of delivery riders.” – Steve Gibbons

“A ban on travelling on Sydney trains will drastically increase my commute times, it will restrict the places I can go, and reduce the travel options available to me.” – Mariske Marnane

2. An equity and inclusion issue that takes the wheels out from under those who face the highest levels of transport disadvantage

E-bikes are not just for the 'strong and fearless.' They are a mobility equaliser:

- Essential for people who live in parts of western and southern Sydney that have unreliable, or infrequent buses, they can be an essential first and last mile connector.
- Vital for people to feel safer when cycling on Sydney roads – particularly women. E-bikes boost women's confidence to ride, make riding more accessible to those who are less fit or who perceive themselves to be 'not fit enough.'
- Used by people with disabilities, chronic illness, and injuries for mobility, rehabilitation, and low-impact exercise.
- Vital for parents without cars, especially those transporting children by cargo bike.
- A key enabler for elderly riders to stay active, social and connected.
- A cost of living measure – owning and running an e-bike and combining with train trips is significantly cheaper than running a car, and can be a replacement for a car, or the need for a second family car.
- Essential for people in outer suburbs and regional areas where safe cycling routes and secure station storage are lacking.

"Living in Hornsby, where there are very few bike paths and even fewer safe ones, I always catch the train down to Meadowbank to have access to the bike paths. The government want people to be active and exercise, but don't appear to help us in any way." – Geoff Worner, Hornsby

"I am a disability pensioner who, due to the rising cost of living, can no longer afford to run a car. I saved up for a year and purchased an e-bike from a reputable brand. This e-bike + train combo is how I get to healthcare, study and visit family. A ban completely disrupts my ability to function in daily life." – Tyler, Newcastle

"My dad is in his 70s and he loves riding his ebike with all his senior friends. It's impossible to get a senior to load and unload an ebike out of a car so restricting e-bikes on trains and metros means you're taking a step back into the stone age for the elderly who are trying to keep fit and enjoy their retirement." – Paul Wang

3. The ban will undermine efforts to ease congestion relief, and slow down Sydney's roads

E-bikes paired with trains are a powerful tool for keeping Sydney's transport network flowing. Every rider who takes their e-bike on a train, instead of driving, removes a car from already congested roads, freeing up space for freight, essential workers and those who have no alternative but to drive. It's an important move to help achieve mode shift that benefits congestion, cost of living, and the environment. A ban would:

- Force thousands of people back into cars, adding to peak-hour gridlock.
- Slow the movement of goods and services, hurting business productivity.
- Increase travel times for everyone – from commuters to delivery drivers.

E-bike + train trips help keep Sydney's roads moving and the economy productive. Removing this option risks reversing years of progress in reducing congestion and improving transport efficiency.

E-bike riders also rely on the safety net of being able to get on a train with their e-bike in the event of a mechanical problem, bad weather, or tiredness. E-bikes are often too big to squeeze into a car like regular bikes so being able to use rail to get close to home in an emergency is big safety blanket for many riders that give confidence to go car-free for many more trips.

"If they go ahead with this, I'll just go back to driving to work." – Ellis, Marrickville

"My wife commutes by train + e-bike via a cycle path. If they go ahead with this she'll just go back to driving to work as the bus connection to the train station is slow and unreliable. This just means more cars on the road and less public transit use." – Alexander Saunders

4. It will affect tourism and major events

Most major bicycle events rely on train transport to either get people to the start line or home from the finish. This strengthens public transport use, avoids significant traffic congestion, and reduces community disruption. Events like the Bicycle NSW Spring Cycle and MS Gong Ride depend on rail access, and the uncertainty of a ban is already having an impact, with some Spring Cycle participants requesting refunds, creating an immediate economic loss.

A ban would also harm bicycle tourism, which is increasingly recognised as an economic driver for towns and regions across NSW. Many regional destinations are actively investing in cycling infrastructure such as rail trails, mountain bike parks and connected paths, with e-bikes playing a key role in attracting visitors. Train access makes it easy for riders to bring their bikes to destinations like the Southern Highlands, the Blue Mountains and Illawarra coastal trails, where they spend on cafés, restaurants, accommodation and local attractions.

Removing the ability to take bikes on trains would reduce visitation, cut spending in regional economies and undermine the return on public and private investment in cycling tourism infrastructure.

"I would like to add in the economic factor to some degree, as towns and regions are setting up for increased tourism with bikes as a focus. Mooball, for example, in northern NSW, has boomed with the Northern Rivers Rail Trail. Lots of ebikes there! This situation will be the same in other regional towns...Without trains to transport our bikes, we are likely to do this much less frequently." – John Hughes

"We take our very expensive Tern e-bikes with Bosch batteries to Newcastle and Wollongong on the train several times a year. We stay for the weekend, paying for accommodation and meals. This will definitely have an effect on cycle tourism." – Garey Gracie

5. A blanket ban is a blunt instrument that isn't grounded in evidence

The problem is not e-bikes themselves, but unsafe batteries. Most fires occur during charging, but this does not take place on trains. The risk of a first starting in transit is extremely low.

While incidents have occurred, they are rare and almost always linked to unregulated imports or modified devices.

A blanket ban unfairly penalises compliant riders who have invested in high-quality, legal devices that meet recognised safety standards.

Rather than 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater,' NSW should take a measured, risk-based approach that balances genuine safety concerns with the significant benefits e-bikes bring to our transport network, economy and communities. Our solutions on the next page outline how this can be done sensibly and effectively.

"Plus what defines an e-bike? What about my road bike with battery to change gears? It has a battery! And if they don't like batteries what about laptops, mobiles, heart pacemakers, etc." – Alan Corven, Central Coast

Recommendations

Immediate actions

Instead of imposing a six-month ban, it is essential to adopt common-sense solutions that allow reputable e-bikes on trains, restricted to the front and rear carriages.

This approach reduces risk while enabling these spaces to be fitted with additional fire safety measures.

Major events that contribute to Sydney's economy and raise funds for charity should also be exempt, particularly as they are held on weekends when the impact on regular commuters is minimal.

Our rail workers are on the frontline of making this work. We're asking them to join with e-bike users in shaping a practical way forward – one that balances risk, safety, access, and the needs of all passengers.

1. Implement an exemption for safe, high-quality e-bikes:

Allow all major brand bikes that conform to EN15194. This is the current global best practice standard for all elements of a complete e-bike, and it is regularly updated and adopted in most major markets, including for the quality bike brands imported into Australia. However, e-bike modification kits should be banned on trains.

2. Designate first and last carriages for compliant e-bikes:

Allocate the first and last carriage on every train and Metro for EN15194-compliant e-bikes, with additional fire safety equipment and clear signage. Completely ban charging on trains.

3. Guarantee exemptions for bicycle events:

Ensure events such as the Spring Cycle and MS Gong Ride can continue to use train access for participants.

4. Exempt all disabled, less able and chronically ill people:

A critical equity measure to ensure those who rely on e-bikes for mobility, rehabilitation, or access to work, healthcare, and community life are not unfairly disadvantaged. Many in these groups have limited public transport or safe cycling options, and an exemption would protect their independence and participation.

Recommendations

Medium-term actions (next six to 18 months)

While banning e-bikes on trains may seem like a small regulatory issue, it has sparked a chain reaction that highlights the need to get the regulatory settings for e-mobility and active transport right across the board. If the NSW Government is serious about supporting active transport, it must also lead broader reforms that support people to move around their city and towns more safely, efficiently and sustainably, while balancing train fire safety risk. Several actions should be also considered in the medium-to-longer term:

1. Strengthen national e-bike safety standards:

Advocate to the Australian Government to ensure all e-bikes imported, sold and used in Australia meet accepted international safety and speed standards by:

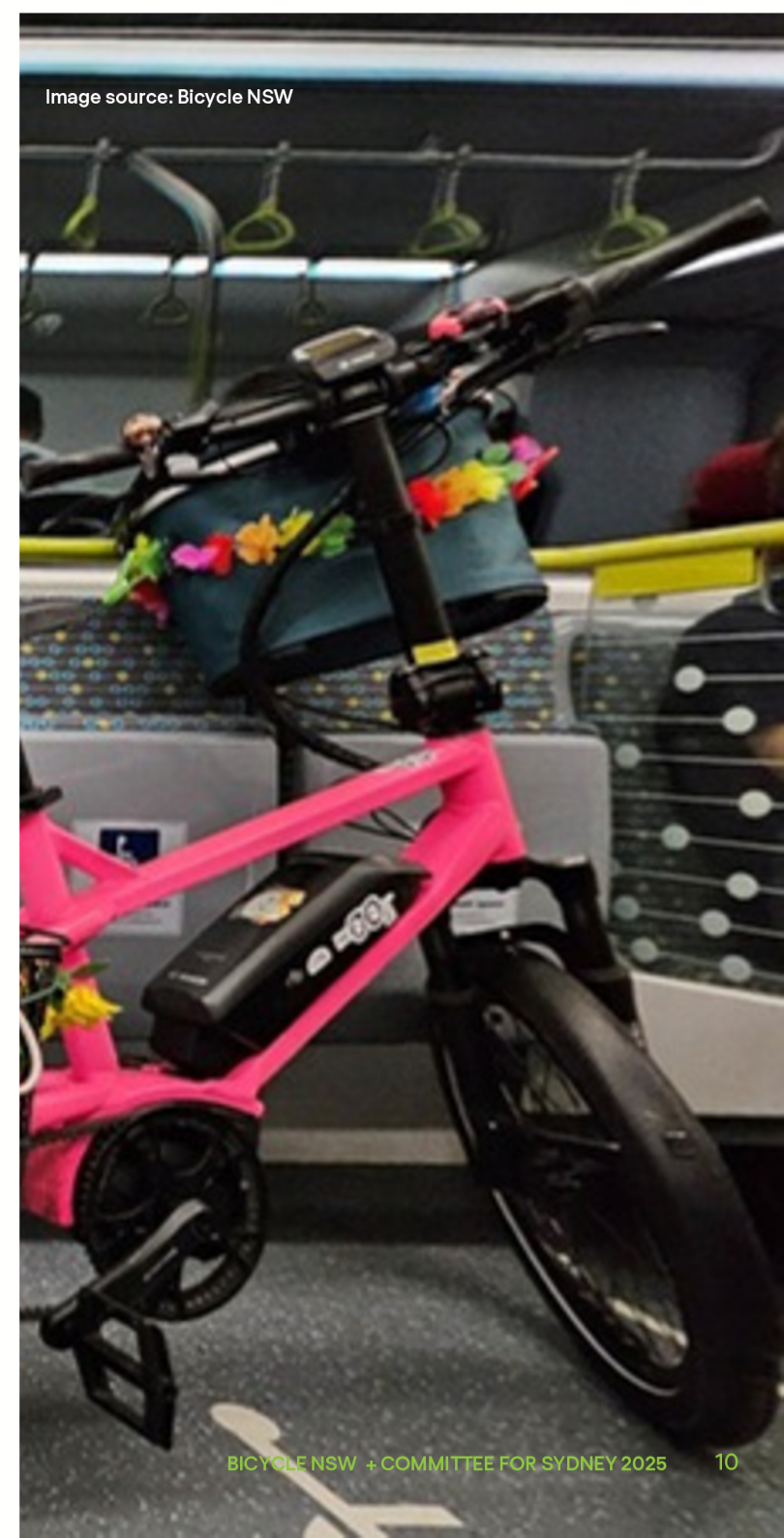
- Re-establishing an e-bike vehicle category within the Road Vehicle Standards Act, requiring EN15194 compliance for imports.
- Requiring evidence of compliance for every imported e-bike to enable simple enforcement.
- Updating the definition of EPAC in National Roads Regulation to include EN15194 compliance (in line with the joint WeRide position).

2. Invest in safer, more connected bike networks:

- Increase Get NSW Active grants by at least \$10 million to reduce gaps and severance in cycling networks.

3. Upgrade bike amenities at stations:

- Provide secure bicycle parking, storage sheds and lockers at at key railway stations that currently lack facilities.



Recommendations

Medium-term actions (next six to 18 months) – cont.

4. Work with food delivery providers to ensure gig economy workers are riding safe bikes:

Partner with major food delivery platforms and micromobility providers to replace unsafe or non-compliant e-bikes with certified, EN15194-compliant models. This could include a NSW-supported trade-in or subsidy program, following the example of New York City's recent initiative with Uber and Zoomo, which allows delivery workers to exchange uncertified bikes and batteries for safer, compliant models at little or no cost. Such programs improve safety, reduce fire risk and protect the livelihoods of thousands of workers who rely on e-bikes to earn an income.

5. Integrate shared e-bikes into public transport:


Strengthen the supply of shared e-bikes at key railway stations within a clear state framework and integrate usage costs into the Opal system.

6. Guarantee roll-on capacity for regional trains:

Ensure new regional trains include roll-on bike capability in both design and delivery.

7. Support e-bike awareness and rider education:

Promote and integrate the Bicycle Schools NSW Licence program, essential for e-bike safety and awareness, into Transport for NSW education resources.





Bike storage on regional trains in Germany, promoting bike-tourism and supporting regional inter-city commuters. The new NSW Regional Trains must have roll-on capacity for bikes.



Keep in touch

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