

EMTB PILOTS ON PUBLIC LANDS



ABOUT EMTBS

PeopleForBikes serves as a resource on bike and electric bike management issues to agencies seeking to provide the highest benefit to both the land they manage and its users.

This guide to conducting electric mountain bike (eMTB) pilot programs can help land management agencies design and implement studies that shed light on the potential benefits and impacts of eMTB access and inform data-driven decisions.

eMTBs are a new technology and take time to integrate and fully understand. PeopleForBikes has assisted a variety of agencies in designing pilot programs that meet their needs and inform sound policy development.

eMTBs are becoming an increasingly popular form of recreation – they allow individuals of varying ability to get out and ride. eMTBs also:

- » Help aging populations stay active and healthy.
- » Encourage trail users to recreate by bicycle.
- » Increase the number of users who can access a trail.
- » Make longer distance trail experiences viable by bike, and extend the range of trips where a bicycle can be used.



HOW IT WORKS

Step one: *Research*

- » Understand the various local, state and federal rules that apply to eMTBs in your area.
- » Develop a timeline, goals and objectives for the project.
- » Make a list of interested and affected stakeholders and an outreach plan.

Step two: *Engage*

- » Determine the range of trails that could be open to Class 1 eMTBs within your larger trail system, ideally a 10-20 mile loop of multi-use singletrack and in coordination with other agencies and stakeholders.
- » Make it transparent to your trail users that you are considering an eMTB pilot program through all of your available communication channels.
- » Solicit feedback from stakeholders and amend the program as needed.

Step three: *Plan*

- » Make a map that shows which trails will be open vs. closed to e-bikes, and publicize this map and the project.
- » Continue to engage stakeholders.

Step four: *Initiate*

- » Work through the appropriate and relevant management or administrative steps to temporarily allow Class 1 eMTBs on certain trails or segments of trails, with specificity about where eMTBs are allowed to go.
- » Notify trail users through a variety of outreach mechanisms on the appropriate maps and on designated signs posted at the most frequently used trailheads/gathering areas.
- » Inform users that although the trail is regulated as open to non-motorized trail users, it is open to Class 1 eMTBs only (but not combustion engine vehicles) for a pilot period of 6 months (less or more, depending on the project).

Step five: *Measure*

- » Develop and administer a survey at key trailheads. Example survey questions are listed to the right.
- » On a select number of relatively busy trail usage days, a volunteer or land manager could be positioned at key trailheads to administer surveys to trail users. Otherwise, install a drop box and paper forms for users to fill out for the duration of the pilot project.

POTENTIAL SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. What trail(s) did you use today?
2. What activities did you do today?
 - ☐ Run
 - ☐ Hike
 - ☐ Mountain bike (traditional or electric)
 - ☐ Horseback riding
 - ☐ ATV
 - ☐ Motorcycle
3. How familiar are you with eMTBs?
 - ☐ Never heard of them
 - ☐ Own an eMTB
 - ☐ Have ridden an eMTB
 - ☐ Know about them but have never ridden one
4. Did you participate in an eMTB demo today?
5. If you rode an eMTB today, how was your experience?
 - ☐ Extremely negative
 - ☐ Somewhat negative
 - ☐ Neither positive or negative
 - ☐ Somewhat positive
 - ☐ Extremely positive
6. How many eMTBs did you encounter on the trail today?
7. How fast do you think eMTBs, go on average?
8. If you didn't ride an eMTB today, how did they affect your trail experience?
9. Do you think eMTBs should be allowed on these trails? Why or why not?
10. If you rode an eMTB for the first time today, did it change your perception?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?



EVALUATION METHODS

Observe traffic volume, speeds and collisions on two weekend days and two weekdays per month for each month of the pilot program in key locations along the trail (preferably one observation point per every 5-10 miles of open trail). These methods can be altered to fit the needs of your area.

Observations should include:

1. Cyclists observed (traditional mountain bicyclists vs. electric mountain bicyclists)
2. Other trail users observed
3. General breakdown of age and gender
4. Perceived speeds
5. Any interactions that merit recording/potential conflict between trail users

BEST PRACTICES

- » Land managers, resort staff and/or trail users make field observations as needed and as time allows.
- » Land managers host one focus group within the first month of the pilot program and within the last month to evaluate user responses.
- » Land managers accept community feedback through an online form, paper forms and email addresses throughout the pilot program.
- » Land managers conduct stakeholder engagement before, during and after the pilot program.

COSTS

Potential costs of this pilot program could be:

- » Staff time for survey design and completion.
- » Hosting two focus groups.
- » Administering (if necessary) new access designations.
- » Administering surveys.
- » Materials cost for printing maps, surveys and signs, maintaining the survey drop box and other needed survey materials.

PeopleForBikes can help alleviate some potential costs associated with the program. Demo bikes or a demo fleet can also be provided to local bicycle retailers or land management agencies for testing.



EXISTING INFORMATION ON EMTBS

PeopleForBikes developed best management practices, guidebooks, studies and other resources to help land managers make informed decisions for eMTB access. Resources include:

- » Land Manager Handbook (developed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management)
- » Studies on user perceptions of eMTBs
- » Survey of land managers on eMTBs
- » Best management practices for eMTB trail design
- » eMTB trail resource studies
- » eMTB trail etiquette
- » Recorded webinars
- » Overview of U.S. federal, state and local e-bike policies

Find these resources at: <https://peopleforbikes.org/e-bikes>

