



E-Bikes in CT!

By Dylan Steer

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As my Fellowship with Sustainable CT comes to a close and I have spent a summer close to the environmental happenings across the state of Connecticut, I realize how much I've learned in such a short time. Particularly, this summer I've taken interest in a [state program](#) with the aim to proliferate the use of e-bikes on the roads of CT. I was elated to learn about such a program, with everyone in the state being eligible to receive a \$500 rebate with the purchase of an e-bike at local bike shops, with an additional \$1,000 rebate for those living in economically distressed neighborhoods. As a resident of Stratford, I was eligible for the total \$1,500 rebate if I was to be enrolled in the program, which had a two-week enrollment period. I was excited to be a part of this program, and even



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if I knew I was not guaranteed benefit from it since it was a first come first serve program, I was glad to be a part of it nonetheless.

Living in a country with predominantly car dependent infrastructure, it sometimes feels like a struggle to travel safely and sustainably. Without living in a large metropolitan area, many communities are simply not walkable. With some buzz around “15-minute cities” (where all of one’s living necessities are within a 15 minute walk) and some cities in the U.S. even making efforts to reclaim roads from automobiles like [NYC](#) and [Seattle](#), it’s the perfect time to invest in biking. Some readers may even recognize bike lanes appearing in local urban areas like [New Haven](#) and Bridgeport. Sustainable CT encourages this kind of development specifically through action 6.15 for safe biking communities. E-bikes offer a useful compromise to some otherwise inconvenient aspects of biking in less cyclist friendly areas. With an e-bike, propulsion comes from both the rider’s input through pedaling and an onboard rechargeable battery that assists the rider. The rider can usually choose varying levels of assistance from the battery depending on the kind of e-bike. From personal experience, the sensation is similar to what I would imagine an exoskeleton feels like from some sci-fi film.

With the assistance of the e-bike’s battery, exhaustion from long distance rides is remedied from the assistance of the motor. Also, in areas where farther distances need to be traversed, the additional speed of an e-bike comes in handy, with many e-bikes reaching top speeds of around 28 miles per hour.

Coming back to CT’s e-bike rebate program, a few weeks after my initial application, an email reached me notifying me that my application was rejected, as were thousands of other applicants who were unable to take advantage of this year’s funding for the program. There were over 6,000 applications in only 10 days, but only 500 people received a voucher, all for \$1,500. With only about 8% of applicants receiving the voucher, it is apparent that there is a demand for e-bikes in CT, if only the program were expanded. As of now, the program’s three-year budget has only enough funding for 1,000 more vouchers.

Through the program's already established network with local bike shops, there is massive potential to expand this program to all who could benefit from the use of an e-bike. In a state of 3.6 million, we should aim beyond just 500 e-bikes on the roads. Connecticut has the potential to become a hub of sustainable infrastructure, the envy of other states, as forward-thinking development is [more important now than ever](#).

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