



E-BIKE LENDING LIBRARIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

The concept of e-bike lending libraries is simple: they allow people to borrow e-bikes – for a few hours or a few months. Borrowing lets people try e-bikes when they’re not ready or able to commit to the expense of buying one. By getting people used to riding e-bikes for everyday trips, lending libraries make e-bikes more accessible, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and advance city and state climate goals.

A 2025 report offers a comprehensive scan of e-bike lending libraries across the U.S. Through interviews and surveys, Portland State University researchers identified key elements, goals, commonalities and differences among 54 e-bike lending libraries in the United States. The research team also produced an online resource to keep track of them all: the U.S. E-Bike Lending Library Programs Tracker.

By integrating e-bikes into local transportation systems, cities can mitigate automobile congestion and improve overall urban mobility.

TO BUY OR TO BORROW?

The concept of a library that offers something other than books has grown in popularity in recent years. Many traditional book libraries have begun to complement their services with the addition of a “tool library” or a “library of things” to provide the community with shared resources or assets.

Some public book libraries even allow patrons to borrow bikes or e-bikes. However, a public book library that contains e-bikes in its catalog is not the only kind of system being considered in this report. While this system certainly can be effective, e-bike lending libraries are not exclusively being offered through existing public libraries. In the report, the authors define an e-bike lending library as any program or system that allows individuals to check out an e-bike for low to no cost for a period of time.

In addition to an overview of existing lending libraries, the report also offers a look at the current e-bike market in the U.S. and e-bike incentive programs. Sales of e-bikes outpaced electric cars and trucks in the past three years, and e-bikes now represent approximately 20% of the bicycle market. Incentive programs provide financial assistance to people who want to purchase e-bikes, and pairing a lending library with an incentive program can be an effective means of outreach and encouragement.

Of the 54 programs they scanned, the researchers found that they tended to operate under one of three main models: **community resource libraries**, **ride-to-purchase programs**, and **long-term access programs**.

Community resource libraries prioritize providing free or low-cost e-bikes as shared transportation assets, often targeting underserved populations.

Ride-to-purchase programs focus on encouraging eventual e-bike purchases, by offering users the chance to test various models and explore financial incentives, such as rebates.

Long-term access programs, often subsidized by grants, lease e-bikes at below-market rates to community members, enabling them to integrate e-bikes into their daily routines over extended periods of time.

Community resource programs were the most common, with 28 of the 54 lending libraries built on this model.

E-BIKE LENDING LIBRARY GOALS

E-bike lending libraries are designed to achieve six overarching goals: sustainability, equity, ownership, utility, recreation, and economic vitality. Most programs address multiple goals, with sustainability, equity, and ownership being the most prevalent.

The goals of each program shape how e-bike lending libraries are designed and carried out. Programs focused on sustainability aim to cut greenhouse gas emissions by promoting e-bikes as a clean, zero-emission way to travel. Equity-driven programs work to improve access for low-income and underserved communities, helping to remove transportation barriers. Ownership-focused programs let people borrow e-bikes over time to reduce cost and knowledge gaps, with the goal of eventually supporting personal e-bike ownership. Other programs aim to promote the use of e-bikes

for recreation, utility (like running errands or cargo delivery), and economic vitality by supporting tourism and local businesses.

As e-bike lending library programs are becoming more popular, communities across the country are looking for ways to fund these programs. Out of the 54 lending libraries found in the scan, the researchers were able to determine funding for 43 libraries. Thirty-six (36) libraries received funding from a grant, and five received funding from donations. The rest received funding from sponsorships or private funds.

Community organizations interested in forming a new e-bike lending library, or growing an existing one, will find a wealth of resources and insights in the report.

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MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY

The complete report and the online tracker can be found at:

<https://trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1639>



The Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC) at Portland State University (PSU) is a multidisciplinary hub for all things transportation. We are home to the Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation (IBPI), the data programs PORTAL and BikePed Portal, the Better Block PSU program, and PSU's membership in PacTrans, the Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium. Our continuing goal is to produce impactful research and tools for transportation decision makers, expand the diversity and capacity of the workforce, and engage students and professionals through education, seminars, and participation in research.