



Asian American Federation

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Asian American Federation and Partners Rally to Protect Immigrant Food Delivery Workers from E-Bike Crackdown

New York City: This morning, the Asian American Federation, in partnership with The Biking Public Project and Transportation Alternatives, held an E-Bike Rally to Protect Immigrant Food Delivery Workers on the steps of City Hall to protest Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Police Department's planned enforcement of electric bicycle ("e-bike") regulations starting January 1, 2018. Council Member Margaret S. Chin and Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou and approximately 125 New Yorkers joined the Federation and our partners to urge the Mayor to reconsider the enforcement.

The NYPD's crackdown on e-bikes will lead to crippling fines, criminal citations, and the potential loss of employment for e-bike workers, many of whom work for the restaurant industry. These workers will bear the burden of the fines, which small business owners pass onto them, and risk losing their jobs if their e-bikes are confiscated. Many delivery cyclists are immigrants, undocumented, and rely on low-wage jobs for their livelihood. The criminalization of this population will have a devastating impact on this workforce.

The City's e-bike policy states that while e-bikes are legal to own, they are illegal to operate in New York in the absence of state law governing the use of e-bikes. The Federation and our advocate partners consider the e-bike policy to be antithetical to the Mayor's claim that New York City is a sanctuary city, given that this enforcement will unfairly target the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

While public safety should remain a priority, there is currently no data available on the crash and injury rate associated with e-bikes to justify the City's planned crackdown. With smart regulation, e-bikes have the potential to be a low-cost, eco-friendly, and space-efficient mode of transportation for many New Yorkers, including the food delivery industry on which New Yorkers rely heavily for their everyday meal needs.

Therefore, the Federation and our advocate partners make the following recommendations to the City to address the e-bike issue:

- Stop enforcement on e-bike delivery workers;
- Develop training programs for employers and e-bike delivery cyclists to learn about best safety practices for delivery cycling in the streets;
- Create meaningful processes by which the City invites input from immigrant delivery workers on these and other issues that affect them; and
- Work with State leaders to regulate e-bikes.

We look forward to continuing the discussion with the Mayor, NYPD, and other important stakeholders whose constituents will be impacted by the e-bike regulation.

Jo-Ann Yoo, executive director of the Asian American Federation, said, “The City cannot penalize e-bike workers based on a mistaken perception of safety. These workers are often undocumented immigrants who rely on their e-bikes and low-wage jobs in order to provide for their families. We urge the Mayor to consider our recommendations, which were created with input from delivery workers themselves, to develop an e-bike policy that benefits all New Yorkers and protects our most vulnerable community members.”

Do Lee of The Biking Public Project said, “The Biking Public Project analyzed policing data and found that over 90% of commercial cycling citations occur in just a few wealthy neighborhoods in Manhattan. These neighborhoods order a lot of food delivery yet often disparage the people who deliver the food. Despite city data that shows e-bikes are not dangerous, this year alone, NYC has issued over \$1 million in e-bike fines to workers. The city has also confiscated over \$1 million worth of e-bikes from workers. These staggering sums severely penalize those who make some of the lowest wages in the city. Many delivery workers need e-bikes because of the physical demands of delivery work, which peaks in bad winter weather. Many workers need e-bikes because they are elderly, in their 50s and 60s. Many workers need e-bikes because they have many injuries from car crashes and from robberies and assaults. The Mayor has claimed that the e-bikes enforcement does not harm workers. This is a myth. The Biking Public Project has spoken with hundreds of workers, and the city should too. The City should rescind its anti-immigrant, anti-worker, and anti-safe streets e-bike enforcement plan. E-bikes enforcement of those who deliver our food is delivering injustice to low-wage immigrant workers.”

“We're calling on Mayor de Blasio to direct the NYPD to immediately stop targeting and harassing immigrant working cyclists, and to call off the e-bike crackdown planned for next year,” said **Paul Steely White, executive director of Transportation Alternatives**. “Meanwhile, our elected leaders in Albany and in New York City must establish a legal framework for e-bike users. With smart regulation, e-bikes have the potential to be a low-cost, space-efficient, pollution-free option which makes cycling accessible for long-distances, and for all ages and abilities.”

“I thank the Asian American Federation for bringing attention to this issue,” said **Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-Queens)**. “Safety must always be a top priority, but no group should have their livelihood threatened. I hope that a compromise can be reached.”

Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) said, “For many small business owners, e-bikes are a lifeline and the means to keep a restaurant up and running. By cracking down on this method of transportation without credible data, the City is turning its back on workers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants. Instead of imposing fines that will cripple New York’s most vulnerable, we must work across levels of government to ensure that e-bike protections prioritize both public safety and workers.”

Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou said, “I stand with delivery workers, small businesses, colleagues, and transit advocates in calling for reasonable and fair electric bike enforcement. For many delivery workers, their livelihood, and that of their families, depends on the use of these vehicles. That is why it’s critical that we work towards solutions that empower these workers, the vast majority of whom are low-income immigrants, while respecting traffic rules across our City.”

“While we recognize the City's efforts to improve traffic safety and quality of life, we must not ignore that food delivery workers, who have to use e-bikes every day to provide for their families, are very much a part of the fabric of the communities that we serve and protect,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “When my office conducted a survey to better understand the experiences of these workers, we discovered that many of them, especially those who speak limited English, have little to no understanding of the State and City's regulations on e-bikes while still having to bear the devastating, disproportionate consequences of increased enforcement. I strongly believe that a fundamental component of public safety is the trust

cultivated between our government and the diverse communities that call our City home. That's why I stand with these workers and their families to urge the Administration to create a solution that achieves safety without sacrificing our principles as an inclusive City.”

“Confiscation of e-bikes would have a disproportionate and devastating effect on low-wage, immigrant workers who rely on e-bikes for their livelihood,” said **Council Member Rafael Espinal**. “E-bikes are good for our economy, small businesses, and the environment, as they enable mobility while reducing our reliance on motor vehicles. This is why I have sponsored Reso No. 108 in support of a bill in the state legislature, which would include electric-assisted bicycles in the definition of bicycle and thereby permit their use. This would be an important step for our city’s workers.”

Council Member Peter Koo said, “Delivery workers often work long hours for low wages, and e-bikes are their tools for survival. A crackdown on e-bike users would have serious consequences on immigrant delivery workers who rely on them for an affordable and efficient mode of transportation. Rather than penalize the working class immigrant community, the city should work with them to provide more affordable and reliable transportation options.”

The Asian American Federation works to raise the influence and well-being of the pan-Asian American community through research, policy advocacy, public awareness, and organizational development. Established in 1989, AAF supports over 65 Asian American community service agencies, which work to meet the critical needs of the fastest-growing population in New York City. For more information, please visit www.aafederation.org.