

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
88R9248 BEE-D

H.B. 715
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Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, persons with disabilities in Texas who enjoy outdoor recreation may face challenges accessing state parks due to physical barriers and limited transportation options. Traditional bicycles may not be a viable option for those with mobility impairments or chronic health conditions. What's more, while many state parks offer accessible trails and facilities, these amenities may be limited. Although electric bicycles could provide a solution via offering a more accessible and efficient mode of transportation, current Texas law does not permit the use of electric bicycles in state parks. This makes it difficult for persons with disabilities to experience fully the natural beauty and recreational opportunities that Texas state parks have to offer.

H.B. 715 would permit visitors to ride Class 1 electric bikes, which have motors that assist the rider when pedaling, in all areas where bicycles are allowed. It also would authorize parks to determine areas in which visitors could use Class 2 electric bicycle. Class 2 electric bicycles are equipped with a motor that can be activated by a throttle, similar to a motorcycle. This would provide promote greater inclusion and a more enriching outdoor recreation experience for persons with disabilities in Texas state parks.

H.B. 715 amends current law relating to the operation of an electric bicycle in a state park.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 13.024, Parks and Wildlife Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 13, Parks and Wildlife Code, by adding Section 13.024, as follows:

Sec. 13.024. OPERATION OF ELECTRIC BICYCLE IN STATE PARK. (a) Defines "bicycle," "Class 1 electric bicycle," and "Class 2 electric bicycle."

(b) Authorizes a person, notwithstanding any other law and except as provided by Subsection (d), to operate in a state park:

(1) a Class 1 electric bicycle in an area where the operation of a bicycle is permitted; and

(2) a Class 2 electric bicycle in an area where the person has been authorized by the park to operate a Class 2 electric bicycle.

(c) Requires the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission by rule to adopt:

(1) forms and procedures for a person to apply to a state park for authorization to operate a Class 2 electric bicycle in the park; and

(2) criteria for an employee of a state park to use to:

(A) approve or disapprove an application under Subdivision (1);
and

(B) place limitations, if any, on the area of the park in which
operation of a Class 2 electric bicycle is authorized.

(d) Authorizes the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to prohibit the
operation of a Class 1 or Class 2 electric bicycle in an area of a state park
described by Subsection (b) if TPWD determines the prohibition is necessary to
protect:

(1) public safety;

(2) state park infrastructure; or

(3) state fish or wildlife resources or habitat.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2023.