

MA offering vouchers to help buy e-bikes. Here's what to know, and who qualifies



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The \$5 million program hopes to distribute 3,000 e-bikes statewide, through September. Vouchers worth up to \$1,200 are available, with additional funds for safety equipment. The program may be expanded in the future.

This story has been updated with the correct spelling of Alex Salcedo.

WORCESTER – Get ready for a rollout of thousands of electric bicycles in Massachusetts.

Officials announced the program April 14 at Landry’s Bicycles in Worcester. The Massachusetts E-bike Voucher Program will tap into \$5 million from the state budget to distribute 3,000 e-bikes from the start of the program, April 14, through September.

It’s part of the state’s effort to get more zero-emitting modes of transportation on the roadways to cut greenhouse gas emissions connected to climate change. Another emphasis is getting the bikes to low- and moderate-income residents who’ve been traditionally excluded from green technologies.

The statewide effort grew out of four regional pilot programs including one in Worcester from 2022 to 2024 that distributed 200 e-bikes to families.

Greater Boston, Pioneer Valley and Cape Cod were the other locations for the pilot. The four totaled 1,000 bikes distributed that generated 140,000 trips and over 300,000 miles biked.

Like the pilots, residents chosen for the statewide program will pick up e-bikes at participating bike shops, where they will get tips on how to ride and learn safety methods.



Details on income eligibility

It's divided into two buckets. A household making at or below 400% of the federal poverty line will receive a voucher up to \$800 to pay for an e-bike. Vouchers are redeemable at the time of purchase.

Incomes in this category range from roughly \$62,000 for a one-person household to \$128,000 for a family of four.

Families making at or below 225% of the federal poverty line will receive a voucher amount up to \$1,200 at purchase. The income range here is roughly \$35,000 for one person to \$72,000 for a family of four.

Both eligibility categories can receive a \$150 voucher at purchase for helmets, bike locks, tire pumps and lights. Fully charging an e-bike costs less than a dollar, according to officials. There are no state subsidies to cover the cost.

The price of e-bikes start at \$1,200 to \$1,500, according to Greg Affsa, store manager at Landry's Bicycles in Worcester.

Beyond the two income categories, there are other ways to become eligible including participation in an income-certified program. Another is a signed doctor's note that specifies a need for an adaptive e-bike, an option for families that fail to qualify for the \$1,200 voucher.

Life-changing experience

Worcester resident Julie Holy got an e-bike as part of the Worcester pilot and said it changed her life.

The 68-year-old Holy herniated a disk in her back five times since she was 30 and said her e-bike doesn't put the strain on her back that a traditional bike would.

“I feel a lot better,” she said. “I ride from town to town and I don’t want to get off.”

Holy acknowledged riding her e-bike in and around Worcester can be a challenge because of potholes and cars zooming by that don’t always look out for bicycles.

Worcester has roughly seven miles of on-street bike lanes and city officials have said it’s a fragmented network that makes it tough to get from point A to B. The city is working to develop and integrate a system of connected bike paths through a mobility action plan that is part of Worcester’s long-range Now/Next plan.

Going to take time

Achieving a safe and reliable bike network in Worcester and statewide isn’t going to happen overnight, said Alex Salcedo, a Worcester resident and program manager at the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition, also known as MassBike.

“It’s going to be one bike at a time. One training at a time,” said Salcedo, who stressed that there were no fatalities in the e-bike pilot programs.

MassBike and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center is partnering on the statewide program. The application process for getting one of the 3,000 e-bikes is underway.

The first step is a pre-application to determine if a family meets qualifications. Then a predetermined number of applicants will be randomly selected to submit an application.

Applicants must provide qualifying documents of Massachusetts residency and income qualification. Those selected will have one week to provide the documents and will get a voucher that is valid for 60 days.

Vouchers are used at time of purchase at participating bike shops. Landry's is one of the shops. Residents can learn more at ma-ebikes.masscec.com.

Data collection

The Clean Energy Center will collect data from the 3,000 households in the statewide program as the state looks to eventually expand the program. Consultant Aptin LLC will assist with the application and voucher process, said Rachel Ackerman, senior director of clean energy at the Clean Energy Center.

A community-based organization will help low-income families become aware of the e-bike program, said Ackerman. She didn't name the consultant because a contract hasn't been signed.

7,600 miles on her e-bike

Salcedo at MassBike believes we'll see more e-bikes on the roads in the years to come, but it's going to take time. Holy estimated she's logged 7,600 miles on her e-bike and echoed Salcedo's sentiment.

Holy has loved her bike so much that she's graduated from being just a user for exercise, fresh air and a therapeutic way to help her back. She's now working with MassBike to educate e-bike recipients on safety and how they, too, can enjoy tooling around their communities.

"Freedom, fresh air and exercise," said Holy of her e-bike experience. "It's changed my life."