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Res. No. 370

Resolution calling on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to ban e-bikes from the New York City subway system and produce an annual report on the enforcement actions that the MTA takes on e-bikes in the system.

By Council Members Holden, Gennaro and Louis

Whereas, Bicycles equipped with an electric motor and battery (also known as e-bikes) have gained popularity in recent years as a mode of transportation and delivery; and

Whereas, In 2020, New York State created three classes of e-bikes and legalized e-bikes on some streets and highways; and

Whereas, As of November 23, 2020, all e-bikes, regardless of class, are allowed to be operated in New York City (NYC), and with that, have all the rights and are subject to all the duties and regulations applicable to drivers of motor vehicles; and

Whereas, In April of 2023, the MTA adopted a policy that allows the transportation of personal electric vehicles, including e-bikes, on MTA property and on-board transit, including the subway system; and

Whereas, Although the MTA policy prohibits charging or operation of e-bikes in their facilities, there is concern that e-bikes pose a threat to safety, particularly if being transported in the subway system; and

Whereas, Most e-bikes are powered by lithium-ion batteries, and if these batteries are damaged, they can overheat, catch on fire, and lead to explosions, according to the National Fire Protection Association; and

Whereas, An increasing number of e-bikes use cheap or refurbished batteries that are not UL-certified (Underwriter Laboratories, a third-party certification company, is commonly used by companies to verify the safety of their products), which can result in an increased prevalence of fires; and

Whereas, In recent years, there has been a noticeable uptrend in fires related to e-bikes and related injuries and deaths, with 2023 marking a high; and

Whereas, According to NYC Fire Department data reviewed by the news outlet, The Gothamist, NYC firefighters responded to 267 fires caused by faulty lithium-ion batteries in 2023, about a 20% increase from 2022, and the number of deaths from these fires increased from 6 in 2022 to 18 in 2023; and

Whereas, In an effort to ensure that those who ride NYC's subway system are safe from e-bike fires, the MTA should ban e-bikes within the subway system and produce an annual report on the enforcement of such a ban; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the MTA to ban e-bikes from the New York City subway system and produce an annual report on the enforcement actions that the MTA takes on e-bikes in the system.

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