

# Mission Electric: A Bike with a Mission



The storefront on Ives St. is mostly a revolving showroom of many styles of e-bikes. The bikes on display are not for sale. Potential buyers are encouraged to come in for a test ride, then order one that fits their needs.

"So e-bikes are more of a bicycle than a moped or a motorcycle?" I asked Justin. "They are everything you love about your bicycle, and nothing that you don't," he replied.

Basically, an e-bike is a bicycle that assists you while pedaling. They are great for long distances, and offer much relief when trying to make it up steep hills. You may have noticed the red ones all over the city as part of a ride share program. The bikes at Mission employ the same technology.

**Luke Taylor (Motif):** Have you always been interested in alternative transportation?

**Tyler Justin:** I have. I studied anthropology and sustainable development in college. I started in the solar industry in a small start up that started with three of us in a garage and grew to 56 employees, then moved to New York City and began my time with Citibike (the nation's largest bike share). I was in charge of on-street technology: kiosks, docking points and customer interface. It was my job to make a program for it all. My career has been geared toward these types of projects that have a thread of sustainability.

**LT:** Was it hard to set up shop in Providence?

**TJ:** It took persistence to figure it out. There were times when people were like, "You can't do that," for whatever reason, and it's like, "Of course we can." We could have just thrown our hands up and said, "That's it," and stopped there, but... It was reasonable. It was a learning experience. I don't have the full depth of network that I've had in other places because we haven't been here very long. It's a challenge to open a business in a new place. I made it easier by doing most of the work myself. I built the shelves, I built the desk, I built the, you know, everything.

**LT:** Are these bikes unique to other ebikes?

**TJ:** There's nothing that we have that somebody else can't, but our bikes are unique in that you can't find these brands anywhere else in the state. The next closest place is Brooklyn. These bikes are unique because it's a curated selection of the best of what's available on the market. That's what makes them unique. They're the best of the best. As far as the way they work, they are generally the same. There's kind of like everybody else, then there's this group of bikes [points toward the bikes in the show room]. You know, that bike won an award this year, this bike won an award this year, that bike won an award this year, so they're all very well regarded in the industry.

**LT:** Why is Providence ideal for your company?

**TJ:** The size of Providence feels appropriate for a bike. I can be across town way faster than I can in a car. Providence is committing to cycling and cycling infrastructure in a nice way. Bike lanes are popping up, and there's our amazing bike path infrastructure that already exists...the East Bay path, Blackstone Blvd, the Blackstone River path, etc. Mayor Elorza is pretty committed to this and recognizes that if you want to become a modern city and attract a new generation to come here and innovate, and you know, live lives here, a lot of us are looking for cities that support that kind of lifestyle. There are a lot of advantages here in Providence.

**LT:** Do you plan to ride your ebike year round? New England winters can be tough.

**TJ:** If I have to take a rideshare option every so often because the weather is terrible, that's okay, that works for me. I joke with people that there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear. If you have the right gear and are prepared, riding in the rain can be really fun.

This brings us to my test ride. The e-bike that I rode was mostly all black. It was one of the more popular models, and it sat on display in the middle of the showroom. Nothing too fancy, it looked just like a mountain bike. I took off down the street in the rain and instantly noticed the effects of the technology. It glided and almost felt like a motorcycle until I tapped on the brakes. The bike slowed down to a stop. I started peddling again and quickly found myself at a good cruising speed. I could adjust the settings for different degrees of support. It felt durable like a mountain bike, and was really fun to ride.

Take one out for a test ride!

Mission Electric Bike, 198 Ives St, PVD.