Revel introduces a $99-a-month e-bike subscription for NYC residents

Electric moped rental company Revel is expanding its product lineup to include monthly e-bike subscriptions for residents of New York City. It's the latest company to try to capitalize on the e-bike boom by shifting to a Netflix or Spotify subscription model for transportation.

For $99 a month, interested customers can get a stylish electric bike manufactured by NYC-based e-bike company Wing delivered straight to their door. The price also includes complimentary maintenance, including flat tires fixes, loose chains repairs, or brake upkeep. Service requests can be submitted via Revel's smartphone app, and Revel says a repair technician will respond within 24 hours. The company will also supply a bike lock and educational material to help subscribers navigate New York City's less-than-bike-friendly streets.

In an interview, Revel CEO Frank Reig said he watched his fellow New Yorkers embrace cycling in much greater numbers during the early months of the pandemic, and he was determined to meet that demand with a product of his own.

"We've been listening to our users to understand what they want and what they need," Reig said, "and being ready to deliver a vehicle at a time when it couldn't be more needed for a city like New York."

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It's an interesting move from Revel, the shared electric scooter company that has been operating in New York City since 2018. But it's also very much in line with where things are

headed for micromobility companies that survived the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Scooter company Lime recently added electric mopeds to its lineup, as well as e-bikes after acquiring Uber’s bike-share company Jump. Bird also dabbled with electric bikes and mopeds before deciding to stick with scooters.

With e-bikes typically costing between $1,400 and $3,000, subscriptions are seen as a more affordable alternative to personal ownership. The founders of SoundCloud recently launched an e-bike subscription service in Germany called Dance. Swapfiets is another service that is well-established in some European markets. The Dutch company just recently added e-bikes to its roster of products and launched in Berlin in July. And in the US, Bird and Lime have been experimenting with subscriptions for its electric scooters, with mixed results. Another company, Unagi, offers its electric scooters for $39 a month in some US cities.

Subscriptions have been a mixed bag for the auto industry. Ford walked away from its service last fall following low demand. Cadillac shut down its service, Book, in 2018, only to resurrect it several months later with fewer options. BMW recently discontinued its $2,000-a-month Access by BMW service.

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Revel’s in the shared moped business; why not something similar for e-bikes? Asked whether Citi Bike’s exclusive contract with the city of New York meant Revel couldn’t have launched a shared e-bike service, Reig said Revel wanted to avoid blocking the sidewalks like most scooter companies. “We don’t want to be on the sidewalk,” he said.

It’s also Revel’s latest effort to grow beyond mopeds. The

company recently announced plans to building a DC fast-charging station for electric vehicles in New York City, where it is based. Revel first launched its shared moped service in Brooklyn in 2018, eventually expanding in Manhattan and Queens. And it has been growing ever since landing a $27.6 million investment from a group of backers including Ibex Investors, Toyota AI Ventures, Blue Collective, LaunchCapital, and Maniv Mobility.

Now the company is ready to branch out into a new mode of electrified transportation, though not too divergent from its fleet of battery-powered mopeds. Wing has been making and selling e-bikes since 2018, when it first released its stylish, VanMoof-looking Freedom model. Its latest models, the Freedom 2 and Freedom X, are cleaner versions of that original bike.

The Freedom 2 includes an integrated 36-volt battery and a 550W Bafang hub motor. It has a top speed of 20 mph and a range of 60 miles, depending on which power setting you're using. The Freedom X includes the same parts, as well as a hidden digital display and torque sensors that regulate the motor based on how hard you're pushing the pedals.

Photo by Amelia Holowaty Krales / The Verge

Seth Miller founded Wing after his first e-bike was stolen from in front of his office building. The company that manufactured the bike had disbanded, so he started researching different suppliers. He soon discovered that a majority of the e-bikes sold in the US are just cobbled together from a variety of off-the-shelf Chinese-made parts found in a catalog. It sounded simple, so Miller figured he'd try it himself. (*The Verge* reviewed the original Freedom in 2019 and found it to be a stylish and affordable ride.)

"We couldn't be more excited to partner with a fellow NYC

company that shares our vision for modernizing and electrifying urban transportation in an environmentally friendly way," Miller told *The Verge*. "Simply put, New York is better with bikes."

Mopeds are arguably a faster way to get around than e-bikes, but they can also be more dangerous, especially for novice riders. Revel was forced to temporarily shut down its service in New York City last year after two customers were killed and one was critically injured while riding the shared electric mopeds. The company eventually resumed service with new protective measures for riders like a mandatory in-app safety test and a requirement that all riders take a selfie of themselves wearing a helmet before they'll be allowed to ride.

Revel is also partnering with helmet company Fend to offer a discount on its foldable bike helmets. The e-bike subscription service will be called Coast by Revel and interested customers can join a waitlist. Revel will start delivering bikes in March.

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