Enabling joyful biking for timid old folks

Healthy old folk often have a fear of biking even when they are physically able and rode bikes for many years in their youth. They are clear about two fears (1) cars and (2) falling.

Fear of cars can be overcome by riding on sidewalks joining the pedestrians who can also get killed while crossing streets. Fear of falling can be overcome by trying out tricycles and/or recumbent Trikes. For his very first time, my friend Henry gets on an e-Trike in San Jose. The video is 32 seconds long.

Battery assisted bikes and trikes are called e-bikes and e-trikes. These give battery assisted pedaling by using a 5-lb rechargeable lithium-ion battery. The battery gives you energy for about 50 miles at the speed of an average high-school student’s bicycle commute, namely at 10-20 mph. On a class #1 e-bike (i.e. the usual e-bike) the battery helps you, not replacing you. Stop pedaling and your e-bike stops.

Elderly folk might not remember bicycle gear-shifting. Bike gear shifting is not difficult but things can go wrong if you do the wrong thing or if the bike is out of tune. Fortunately, there is a recent breakthrough: automatic shift for e-bikes (3:18). Friends and I have test-ridden one in Palo Alto at The Bike Connection on a Gazelle e-bike priced at $4200.

To begin to understand Enviolo continuous-variable gearing, you must first understand Planetary gears (4:53). I know of only one manufacturer for automatic-shift e-Trikes, Triot.com in Salt Lake City. Their price is roughly $10,000. They ship. Here’s a nice picture of their factory. The earlier technology uses an external chain drive. Enviolo technology has an internal chain, but externally the drive uses a geared rubber belt greatly reducing lubrication needs.

Other worries: I’m an elder living in a retirement home.

1. I no longer have a garage full of tools. “Mike’s Bikes” is two blocks away.
2. Other than bike cages, our retirement home has not particularly secure bike parking. We haven’t yet tested a trike in a cage. Maybe it’s a snug fit.
3. I want to share the Triot with my wife who is smaller than me. How do I adjust the seat?

Blessings: We live ½ mile to a pedestrian/bike bridge crossing a freeway. Bayland trails with no cars on the other side.