

Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) Recommendation: Micro-mobility Policy

WHEREAS, the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) advises the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities in order to ensure a safe and enjoyable circulation for both commuting and recreation within the City of Austin;

WHEREAS, dockless mobility services provide an important transportation option that can help achieve Austin's goals for managed congestion, increased mobility for people without a car, reduced risks associated with driving, and reduced total vehicles miles traveled per capita;

WHEREAS, over 17,000 micro-mobility devices have entered the transportation market through dockless services, and provided over 3 million trips to users in Austin since April 2018, which has created a significant demand on public space by this new transportation mode and impacted pedestrians;

WHEREAS, the Complete Streets policy requires support for users of all transportation modes;

WHEREAS, meeting the requirements of the Complete Streets policy requires careful management of streets that have historically been designed primarily to move as many cars through the system as quickly as possible and do not adequately allocate space to modes other than cars to fully support changed land use patterns;

WHEREAS, until a street has been designed for all-ages-and-abilities multimodal transportation and safely integrates vehicles of differing speeds, micro-mobility users must be allowed to share sidewalks with pedestrians;

WHEREAS, in the 2018 Dockless Mobility Community Survey Report, these responses ranked highest:

On why someone might dislike dockless mobility: "Scooters parked in the way,"

On why someone might be more likely to use dockless mobility: "More Infrastructure, such as a connected bike facility and shared use pathway,"

On the perceived comfort of different infrastructure: "Protected bike lanes,"

In the open-ended responses, sidewalks and supportive infrastructure for scooters such as bike lanes, bike racks, scooter-designated parking areas are mentioned most often;

WHEREAS, according to injured dockless users interviewed in the Dockless Electric Scooter-Related Injuries Study published in April 2019 for Austin by the Austin Public Health (APH) and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC):

- 55% were injured in the street,
- 50% believed surface conditions like a pothole or crack in the street contributed to their injuries,
- 19% believed the scooter malfunctioned (e.g. brakes, wheels, etc.);

WHEREAS, according to the April 2019 APH study, 40% of the interviewed injured users reside outside of Austin and 33% were injured during their first scooter ride;

WHEREAS, many streets, especially in residential neighborhoods, lack places to park micro-mobility devices that do not block a sidewalk, or do not have sidewalks present for micro-mobility parking;

WHEREAS, the speed of scooters makes them a danger to pedestrians on the sidewalk, especially when the riders do not keep a safe distance from pedestrians or follow the principle that the safety of the most vulnerable must be prioritized;

WHEREAS, all pedestrians, especially mobility-impaired ones, have a right to a safe, unimpeded, and enjoyable pedestrian environment;

WHEREAS, as documented in Austin's 2018 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, the presence of bike facilities is associated with decreased pedestrian crash severity, increased walking comfort with a buffer between the street and the sidewalk, and potentially reducing bike riding on the sidewalk;

WHEREAS, judgment of "reasonable and prudent" behavior can be arbitrary and open to diverse interpretation based on subjective observation and experience, and has the potential to be influenced by issues of equity;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the PAC recommends the immediate funding and rapid buildout of the Sidewalk Master Plan / ADA Transition Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan to provide more space for people walking, bicycling, scooting, and other low-speed modes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC recommends the following for safe, unimpeded sidewalk access and to encourage street riding:

- Retain the original language of 12-2-15 (C) (1) about street parking on the curb instead of deleting it. [Recommended text: "(C) A person may park a bicycle or a micro-mobility device: (1) against a street curb and in designated spaces marked for such use"],
- Encourage and provide incentives for scooter parking in the street (rather than sidewalks) e.g. adjacent to driveways, intersections, and other curb cuts,
- Work with scooter service providers to pilot a charger program that deploys scooters in street parking areas instead of in sidewalk areas;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC recommends that Public Works or Transportation Department systematically identify and repair potholes and roadway imperfections, prioritizing zones highlighted by heat maps of micro-mobility injury crashes (shown in Figure 5 of the APH report), anticipated risk areas, and areas of current overall use (such as slide 6 of the March 18, 2019 presentation to the Urban Transportation Commission);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC recommends the inclusion of Service Inspection Requirements and standards for dockless mobility devices to the amendments of Chapter 13-2: Ground Transportation Passenger Services (or Mobility Services) to require streetworthy devices with uniform requirements for durable kickstands, robust braking and suspension systems, adequate wheel sizes, stable platforms, and other standards established through best practice use;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC recommends 20-mph speed zone for all vehicles downtown for all traffic;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC supports City staff's draft Sidewalk Mobility Management Process that includes a hierarchy of solutions ranging from signage, education, enforcement, fleet management, to pedestrian-only zones;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Pedestrian Advisory Council recommends an education campaign by the City encouraging safe and responsible use by residents and visitors alike, with emphasis on observing the principle of prioritizing pedestrian safety;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the PAC recommends that measurable, objective criteria be established within the Sidewalk Mobility Management Process, such as defined speed limits or minimum distances for safe passing on sidewalks which provide greater clarity for enforcement officers regarding what constitutes "reasonable and prudent" behavior.

Date of Approval: May 6, 2019

Vote: 7 - 0 with Mulcahy absent, Henderson and Wochner off of the dais, and Wald and Ahmad voting as full members

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Crossley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jay Blazek Crossley, Pedestrian Advisory Council Chair