




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

THRU: Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: February 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Electric Scooter and Bike Parkland Trail Pilot Program

The Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with Public Works, Austin Transportation (ATD), and the Law Department completed a pilot study that allowed electric scooters and electric bikes on certain parkland trails. The purpose of this memo is to review the results of the pilot and the recommended next steps.

The pilot started in January 2019 and ran through September 2019. With the introduction of micromobility in 2018, there was an uptake in electric bikes and scooters use on parkland trails. PARD heard from electric bike and electric scooter users for the need to safely access certain trails to help improve mobility within the City. A public survey conducted for the ATD micromobility pilot program on streets found that two-thirds of those surveyed said that micro mobility is an easier and faster way to get around and that people prefer to ride on protected bike lanes or urban trails.

City Council Resolution 20181213-107 guided the parameters of the study and the specific trails that hosted the pilot. Electric scooters and electric bikes were allowed on paved parkland trails that were also identified as contributing to the transportation network. The trails in the study included the Johnson Creek Trail, Shoal Creek Trail south of 15th Street, Northern Walnut Creek Trail, Southern Walnut Creek Trail and the Ann and Roy Butler Trail (electric bikes only). It is important to note during the 2019 legislative session, HB2188 defined that electric bikes were to be allowed on trails that had any additional material added to create the trail surface.

Efforts of the pilot included:

- Hosting educational pop-ups along the Butler Trail

- Anecdotal data suggest that many micro-mobility users on the Butler Trail are visiting Austin.
- Park Rangers and ATD Parking Enforcement Officers conducted 150 hours of speed monitoring.
- Two additional trail counters were installed.
 - Trail counters show over 800,000 visitors to the Butler Trail during the pilot.
- Trail etiquette signage was installed by both PARD and The Trail Foundation to communicate safe friendly trail users' guidelines.
- The Trail Foundation collected data on the number and type of users along the Butler Trail.
- PARD partnered with The Trail Foundation to conduct a study to determine potential areas of limited capacity and divide use options on the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail.
 - Study to be complete in 2020.
- Analysis of reports from 311.
- Analysis of on-line survey results
 - 4,647 people responded to the online survey
 - Scooter speed the most reported behavior of concern.
- Geofence was implemented in the final month.
 - Limited the speed of rented electric bikes and scooters to less than 8mph on all prohibited parkland trails.

Recommendations

The Parks and Recreation Department has a responsibility to support the use of trails for recreational means in a comfortable setting. In addition, the City of Austin has a goal to be compact and connected and there is strong evidence that parkland trails play an important role in this goal. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Department recommends the following actions to manage electric scooters on parkland.

- Revise §8-1-31 to clarify that electric scooters are allowed on identified paved parkland trails that were part of the pilot and address potential future additions to the rented micromobility device offerings. The Ann and Roy Butler Trail will continue to be for pedestrian and bike traffic only.
- Continue geofence and review effectiveness to include not allowing scooters to operate within geofenced area.
- Create a culture of shared trails with an improved and comprehensive etiquette campaign
- Working with partners at the Austin Transportation Department to create concession opportunities for rented electric bikes and scooters staging in identified parking areas.
- Codify trail speed limits and work with APD on implementation of the enforcement of codified speed limit.

Recommendations have been presented to the Parks and Recreation Board and the Urban Transportation Commission. These recommendations seek to provide a framework for managing these new and advancing technologies on parkland to allow for the devices to travel safely on identified paved parkland trails. With this additional use there will be a continued need to manage, evaluate and adjust to ensure that all trail users have a safe and enjoyable experience including the top two reasons cited for using parkland trails (1)exercise and (2)enjoying nature by being outside.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
 Nuria Rivera-Vendrmyde, Deputy City Manager