

September 12, 2019

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

It's been great working with ATD and Austin Energy to bring our pilot program into play, to try electric-assist motors with pedicabs which is currently prohibited by the current code (chapter 13-2). The last 18 months have been an absolute game changer for our local vehicle-for-hire pedal-pushing industry. We really appreciate your attention, time and support as we've worked long and hard to get where we are today.

We'd love to make this temporary initiative permanent for our demanding Fall season in an effort to expand our reach and impact as experienced professionals within the blossoming micromobility scene transforming Austin's streets. We're incredibly passionate about moving people in a safe, fun, and memorable way. We'd like to be recognized as a last 2-3 mile solution while still embracing the experiential elements we deliver every day.

We owe the UTC the most appreciation for their first recommendation in August 2017 to try electric pedicabs in a pilot program with the objective to study the use of e-assist motors to write permanent regulations, with the vision of an expanded market for pedicabs as a mobility option. As a cost-effective strategy for reducing drive-alone car trips, we believe in e-pedicabs as a locally-grown travel mode to tap for added trip capacity, a greater range, and jobs accessible to a greater diversity of people, and ask Council to make the pilot program a permanent program.

The UTC pedicab recommendation in 2017 previewed the policy directions later adopted by Council in Strategic Directions 2023 and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, which both call for aligning city regulations to make room for and leverage (and not obstruct) innovation and technology that helps people. We feel that amending chapter 13-2 to allow e-assist for pedicabs is a perfect case to apply these policies, and more. Shared mobility services such as pedicabs are explicitly mentioned in the ASMP as a tool for managing demand and helping people meet their needs without a car easily and safely. Even when equipped with motors, pedicabs run on human hearts and energy at forgiving speeds and with less risk of serious harm in a crash than large, powerful vehicles like cars, and provide fun dynamic experiences that will help make the ASMP's 50/50 mode share goal a reality.

Here's some quick data on the impact of electric assist motors on our business and by extension on the market for short-distance trips as a whole. A survey of pedicab business owners in August 2019 confirms that the success of the pilot program and that e-pedicabs are popular and in demand by pedicab drivers, and there is almost universal agreement that we should have more of them. On the other hand, riders make less

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money with demand with pedal-only, non-electric pedicabs and demand and use of these cabs has gone down and riders. There were over 500 registered pedicabs at the beginning of the pilot and as of July 29 of this year, 419 are left, pedal-only pedicabs making up all the reduction.

The recent arrival of our junior siblings in the transportation space, shared scooters, has been a source of natural rivalry and also a loud statement of the massive demand for short-distance rides. Since April 2018, over 5 million trips with an average distance of 1 mile have been logged in Austin, according to the data reported through the app-based scooter companies. Pedicabs lack an app but serve the same market and have a wider appeal than shared scooters, which are not accessible or desirable for many people, and the trip data provided courtesy of the scooters shows the positive impact of electric assist for all types of shared mobility services including pedicabs.

We also posted a simple poll on Facebook and Twitter which has been running 10-1 in favor of expanding the current pilot program and making it permanent. While not a formal study, this poll is an informative look at the popularity of e-bikes and support for pedicabs in general.

In addition, ride data was collected through the Strava app to record overall mileage and range during a pedicab shift as part of the pilot program. As analyzed by the city, the data confirms our hands-on knowledge that the average mileage per hour and range by drivers using electric pedicabs are greater than those of pedal-only pedicabs. We are certain that with sensible policies for safety and speed, the industry can grow in a healthy way once cleared of regulatory barriers that are like dead soil for a climate in crisis.

To conclude, we are asking for an amendment of the city code to authorize the use of electric-assist motors by any permitted pedicab.

Major city plans from Imagine Austin through the ASMP have strategies for improving quality of life that are based on private sector partnerships and a resilient business environment. As local small businesses, the Austin pedicab industry has a part to play to help nurture and support the vision within these plans: walkable places and complete communities that connect people and promote happy and active lives, and please help us thrive by making this change.

Signed,

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Patricia Schaub
Firefly Class Transport

David Knipp
Movemint Bike Cab

Nathan Lipson
Metrocycle Pedicabs

Casey Clemmons
Texas Trike Pilots

Ken Cameron
Precision Pedicab Manufacturing

Phil Reyna
Kween Cab

Matthew J. Maschek
Austin Pedicab Company

Sarah Yopp
Wonder Traveler Pedicab

Chris Rodriguez
High Roller Pedicab

Adrian Nunez
Danger Noodle Rides

Bernadette Hutchinson
Flat Earth Pedicab

David Hoefler
Natural Choice Pedicabs

Adam Finton
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Ani Colt
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Public Safety Commission

Corey Callahan
Wanderlust Pedicabs

Omar Abu Hamdan
Pedi Express

Chris McInnis
Come and Take It Pedicab

Adrian Ramirez
Austin Bike Taxi

Tim Olson
Cruz Del Sol Pedicabs

Ryan Cope
Hollyweird's Hill Country Experience

Stephen Hatgis
Baustin Pedicab Company

Nathan McDonald
Knight Owl Pedicab

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