

# Electric Scooter Enforcement Program



## Objective

Does the City effectively enforce its regulatory framework for electric scooters and how does that framework compare to peer city practices?

## Background

In Austin, shared electric scooters (e-scooters) first arrived in April 2018 when multiple providers placed thousands of these devices in the city. At the time, the City of Austin did not have any formal rules to manage their use. In response, the City impounded devices and adopted emergency rules for providers. Later, the City formalized these rules. Currently, the City regulates several areas related to e-scooters including permitting, number of devices, speed limits, usage and parking, user requirements, and data sharing.

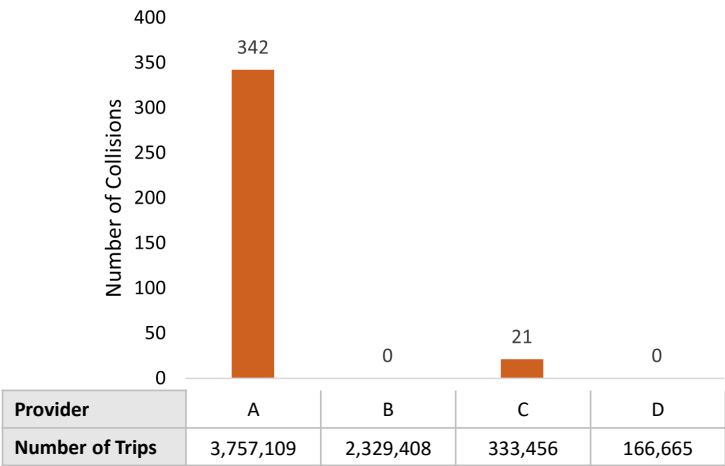
The City’s Transportation and Public Works Department (TPW) is responsible for managing the e-scooter program. Over the last five years, users took almost 18 million e-scooter trips in Austin.

## What We Found

**Finding 1: The City’s ability to make informed decisions about e-scooter safety rules is limited due to a lack of complete and reliable e-scooter data.**

- There are differences between the number of e-scooter trips reported on a public dashboard and the trips reported by providers. TPW staff said this is due to cases where a user books an e-scooter and decides to cancel it at the last minute. These instances are counted as a “Ride” in the provider reports, but not on the dashboard.
- E-scooter collision data reported by the providers is not complete for a few reasons:
  1. Not all providers appear to report collisions.
  2. City rules do not define key terms such as “collision” or “crash.” City staff said the e-scooter providers do not recognize standard definitions for these terms, either.
  3. Providers rely on e-scooter users to report collisions and injuries, but staff noted this does not always happen.
- City e-scooter staff does not have a process to get e-scooter collision data from other stakeholders that collect that data, including hospitals.

**Exhibit 1: Collisions reported by e-scooter providers do not appear to be accurate for 2022 and 2023**



Source: OCA analysis of e-scooter provider collision reports and trip data, June 2024

# Electric Scooter Enforcement Program

## What We Found, Continued

**Finding 2: The City's inadequate coordination could slow its enforcement efforts and negatively impact relationships among e-scooter stakeholders.**

- There are delays reporting some e-scooter violations. For example, TPW field staff responsible for enforcing violations in the right-of-way do not communicate directly with the e-scooter providers. Instead, the providers communicate directly with TPW's office-based group.
- There appears to be inadequate coordination among parties that play a role in the City's e-scooter program. This impacts the City's ability to make e-scooter program changes in a collaborative and timely manner.

**Finding 3: Overall, the City of Austin's e-scooter rules framework is similar to the frameworks of other cities.**

- We surveyed eight cities with shared e-scooter programs - Dallas and San Antonio in Texas, as well as Denver, Nashville, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.
- Rules in all cities covered similar governance and operational issues. There were some differences in specific rules, such as number of devices, operating hours, and speed limits.

## What We Recommend

The Director of the Transportation and Public Works Department should:

- Work with e-scooter stakeholders to establish a process to ensure the City has e-scooter data available to guide operational and policy decisions.
- Engage regularly with e-scooter stakeholders, which could include e-scooter providers, City staff, relevant commissions, and members of the public, to ensure the program meets the needs of the community.