



Legislation Text

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Update on the process to implement Electric Scooters in the City of Colorado Springs

Presenter:

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Summary:

The City of Colorado Springs does not currently permit operation of an electric scooter share business. Based on input from City Council and on best practices, the City posted a Request for Proposals (RFP) to establish an electric scooter pilot program to allow up to three scooter sharing companies to operate locally. Operation agreements with each scooter company will establish standards for the use, storage, and enforcement of shared electric scooters.

Background:

Over the last five years shared electric scooters have become very popular in many American urban centers. In response to stakeholder interest and the benefits that micro-mobility could bring to the City's core, the Public Works Department and Planning Department, prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select up to three electric scooter share companies to operate up to 1,200 (total) electric scooters within the City.

Micro-mobility is a significant issue in urban environments. Devices including bicycles, scooters, and Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Devices (EPAMDs) can help people move about high density areas without having to rely on automobiles. While pedestrian travel is appropriate for short trips (generally less than 10 minutes walking), solutions are needed for trips ranging from a few blocks to a few miles. Personal and shared bicycles and scooters are popular modes of transportation in many areas for these types of trips.

Shared mobility systems are a convenient solution for many users. Bikes and scooters are distributed throughout high use areas and are available when needed. Users avoid the cost of owning and maintaining their own device (electric scooters often cost \$500 to \$1,000) instead paying membership dues and modest trip fees. When a user arrives at their destination the device can be properly and safely parked and become available to other users. Smart technology and phone apps are employed to help users locate available devices and document safe use, including parking.

While shared electric scooters can help address mobility needs, they can also present challenges to users and the public. Questions over safe use (e.g. sidewalk versus road use) and parking (e.g. blocking pedestrian ways) are common in many communities. While an electric scooter traveling at 15 miles per hour may be safe in a designated bike lane or on low volume, low speed roadways, it

would be unsafe for users and those around them on multi-lane, higher speed streets. Furthermore, many communities have faced problems with improperly parked scooters becoming hazardous to pedestrians, blocking access to businesses or other public facilities.

In response to these concerns, which City Council expressed at the Work Session on October 12, 2020, the Public Works Department developed a RFP to select and manage the Escooter Program. The RFP was posted on March 3, 2021 and closed on March 31, 2021. Eight vendors submitted proposals which were reviewed and scored by a selection committee. The selection committee consisted of the Downtown Partnership, Old Colorado City, former City councilwoman Jill Gaebler, and representatives from the Public Works and Planning Departments. The selection committee narrowed the number of submittals to four vendors. These four vendors were required to provide the specific escooter that they plan to deploy and to give access to their app. Selection committee members test rode each scooter and tested the usability of the vendor's app. The selection committee also conducted virtual interviews with each vendor to ask specific questions about program deployment, marketing, escooter operational characteristics, community engagement, and for educating riders on safe riding and parking. Based on experience from the escooter test rides, use of the app, and from the interviews, the selection committee selected two vendors, Lime and Veo, to participate in a pilot program to operate for rent scooters in the City.

The City is currently working with escooter vendors Lime and Veo in developing an Agreement between the vendors and the City. This Agreement will:

- obligate these vendors to operation parameters, parking regulations, information provided to riders, data sharing, fleet size, hours of operation, maintenance, and educational outreach.
- specify fees to cover the City's potential costs to enforce parking regulations including the collection and impoundment of non-compliant scooters.
- establish a one-year pilot program with a 6-month check-in for program adjustments

The vendors are currently developing their operating plans with regards to service area, initial fleet size, and parking areas. It is anticipated that the service area will generally be the urban core of Colorado Springs including the downtown, Old Colorado City, the Westside, Ivy Wild area, and the N. Nevada Avenue corridor. Vendors are also looking for warehouse space and hiring local staff to ramp up operations in the City. At least one vendor has indicated that they could have scooters deployed and operational by early July 2021.

Previous Council Action:

City staff attended the October 12, 2020 Work Session to update Council of the City's plan to deploy scooters. City council providing the following comments:

- Parking ratio is too high
- Need to ensure we get good / respected / experienced companies
- Suggested to go through an RFP process to evaluate companies
- Fees should be discussed with the Council Budget Committee
- Scooters need geofencing capabilities and need to define the area where scooters are not allowed
- Enforcement of parking and operational regulations was a concern
- Tethering could be an issue

City staff attended the December 7, 2020 Work Session to update Council on the City's plan to select vendors through a competitive RFP process.

Financial Implications:

Permit and Scooter fees are set at \$75 per scooter per year and \$40 per scooter station or parking zone. The proposed Fees are intended to fully fund the anticipated cost of enforcement and are in line with similar revocable permit fees for use of the public right-of-way

City Council Appointed Board/Commission/Committee Recommendation:

The above fees were presented and discussed at the November 10th and 24th budget committee meetings. Budget committee approved the recommendation for a \$75 per scooter per year fee and the \$40 per scooter station or parking zone fee. These fees are intended to cover costs for code enforcement staff to enforce and to potentially impound illegally parked scooters.

Stakeholder Process:

Public Works and Planning staff have had multiple discussions with local stakeholders as well as national electric scooter share companies. Where possible, stakeholder concerns were addressed in the RFP and in the Agreement. Administrative regulations were distributed to stakeholders for their consideration in mid-September. Additional discussions occurred with the RFP development.

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

N/A

N/A