

*Micro Mobility Memo for Boston City Council*  
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## Summary

Micro mobility devices, such as electric scooters, are an emerging mode of transportation in cities across the globe. Combining convenience and speed within a low carbon footprint, micro mobility devices offer an attractive “first-mile, last-mile” solution to connect commuters with other transportation networks. In Boston, these technologies have the potential to expand mobility options and increase access to the City’s transit system. These devices are one tool to advance the sustainability goals laid out in Go Boston 2030 and Climate Ready Boston, increasing access to public transit and allowing people to move around the city in a more efficient way. To accomplish this, we need to establish strong but flexible regulations that can respond appropriately to these evolving technologies and not just one device.

Well thought out policies and appropriate permitting can offset the challenges of micro mobility and capture a potential revenue opportunity for cities. Highlighted below are four issues that should be considered as Boston develops regulations that can create a conducive and sustainable environment for micro mobility companies and customers who desire to use their technologies.

## Appropriate Role and Possible Burden on Municipalities:

Business operations for micro mobility companies rely on the use of public space -- our streets. With multiple types of modes launching in cities all at once, proactively putting regulations into place is an important first step to ensure that cities are not on the hook for dealing with complaints, broken devices and other unforeseen issues that could overly burden city staff. Permitting micro mobility companies should be based on a consistent set of evaluation metrics, potentially including:

- Regulating the size of each company’s fleet, including a dynamic cap
- Determining where users are allowed to ride vehicles and at what speed
- Ensuring equitable distribution across neighborhoods
- Accessibility for multiple language speakers, not just English
- Accessibility for those who need or want to pay with cash

Other areas to consider when designing regulations include examining a company’s operational requirements, such as how they will manage complaints, parking compliance, and inclement weather, including snow. Similar to Metro Boston’s Bluebikes bike share system, we believe that micro mobility companies must be held accountable for the appropriate use of their products. Permitting is the first step in this process, with the opportunity to make it an iterative process and adjust as needed. Thinking through which metrics are important to the City will better ensure each device’s operations reflect our shared values and broader policies.

## Data Sharing:

In order to effectively oversee micro mobility companies and ensure operations are flowing smoothly and safely, it is important for the City to have access to data. The City of Portland, Oregon recently went through a permitting process for scooter companies and required the following in their permit application:

- Real-time availability data for their entire Portland fleet
- Archival trip data for their entire Portland fleet
- Archival collision data

- Archival complaint data

These data sharing requirements allow the City to keep tabs on how the micro mobility devices are being used and to help determine how and where improvements are needed. While the companies will be collecting this data for their own internal operations, sharing it with partnering cities will help to support ongoing collaboration and improvements for users. In order to best coordinate across all modes, we recommend that the City of Boston create similar regulations that require data sharing from micro mobility companies.

### **Equity:**

There is a widespread perception that scooters and other new micro mobility devices cater primarily to white, upper middle-class millennials. While many young adults have been eager to adopt this new technology, the devices can help people of all ages access transit options and solve first-mile/ last-mile gaps in our transportation system. For this reason, we think it is important for micro mobility companies to put mechanisms into place that will allow equitable access.

Ideas to consider include:

- Mandates for rebalancing in underserved communities
- Affordable options that include methods for paying in cash
- Ensuring that materials appear in multiple languages

As a part of the Neighborhood Slow Streets program, Boston Transportation Department has already established an equity-based evaluation system, which could potentially be re-purposed to identify which communities have high rates of senior citizens and youth, etc.

### **Safety and Allocation of Space:**

Without streets designed to prioritize the safety of people, permitting and regulations will only go so far. The question of where scooters should be ridden and stored, and the safety implications associated with both issues, is an ongoing concern for users and advocates. As our partners at WalkBoston have highlighted: "Sidewalks should be reserved for people walking or using wheelchairs. If users of micro mobility devices are on the sidewalk, it is likely that the street is unsafe – and that needs to be fixed." As more people take to city streets using modes other than cars, we need to reevaluate how and for whom streets are designed.

We recommend that the City of Boston adds more protected, low-speed lanes that can accommodate both bikes and other micro mobility devices. This is also an opportunity to update curbside management policies. Many people are concerned about where micro mobility devices should be stored when not in use. Parking spaces can be created through the expansion of bike racks or designating on-street parking on street corners or near crosswalks. This second method can be a way to formalize the 'No Parking' zones that exist close to "daylighted" crosswalks, while also improving sight lines. This serves the dual purpose of allowing drivers to more easily see pedestrians who are waiting at a corner to cross if they are not blocked by a vehicle parked too close to an intersection.

### **Early Action Items**

- Increase Vision Zero funding to expand the number of miles of protected lanes in the bike network. This is aligned with both Vision Zero and Go Boston 2030. If built properly this shared space can help connect multiple modes with a low stress way to move throughout Boston.

- Initiate working sessions to begin outlining permit requirements for micro mobility devices. We recommend using the above considerations. A proactive approach to regulating new technology will allow the city to ensure equity.