



August 12, 2022

E-MAIL

Los Angeles City Council Transportation Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Item 3 - Personal Delivery Devices

Dear Chair Bonin and Councilmembers,

On behalf of Coco, I want to express our gratitude to you and to the LADOT team for your thoughtful consideration of formalizing the permits for Los Angeles' Personal Delivery Device program. Coco is thrilled to have worked closely with community members, local businesses, BIDs, chambers of commerce, the LADOT team, Council Offices, and Councilmembers in bringing our service to multiple LA neighborhoods.

The pandemic and now current economic uncertainty has created a huge burden on local restaurants and has forced them to increasingly rely on car-based delivery to reach their customers. These services are often incredibly expensive for both restaurants and customers alike. We are proud to have partnered with over 30 L.A. businesses to provide more cost-effective, reliable and sustainable deliveries. We save our merchant partners between 20% and 50% per order, compared to car-based delivery, and have prevented tens of thousands of pounds of CO2 from being emitted into our air.

Since our initial approval to operate in Los Angeles, we have completed tens of thousands of deliveries safely and built strong relationships in the communities where we operate. Formalizing the permits is the next step in ensuring a successful and safe future for the program.

Coco Background

Six years ago, Brad Squicciarini and I partnered with UCLA professor Rajit Gadh to found and lead UCLA's Connected Autonomous Electric Vehicles (CAEV) Lab. After graduating, Brad and I used that experience to create Coco, a West Los Angeles-based company with the mission to make last-mile food and grocery delivery both sustainable and affordable for residents and local businesses.

One of the key lessons we took away from our work with CAEV was that while autonomous vehicles

offer much promise, the technology wasn't ready to go live yet. That's why Coco's vehicles always have a pilot in control. Below is a summary of the unique benefits of Coco's service:

- **Our low-speed vehicles are as safe as adding another pedestrian to the sidewalk**

Unlike truly autonomous vehicles, our vehicles are remotely piloted 100% of the time. Pilots are trained to move vehicles out of the way of pedestrians and those with disabilities. The vehicles travel at walking speed, and have a bright flag with a flashing light rising above them, reflectors, backlights and headlights to make them clearly visible. Pilots are able to view their surroundings from six different camera angles, and new vehicles are equipped with microphones and speakers, to allow clear communication between pilots and others on the sidewalk.

- **Unlike scooter services, our vehicles never sit out of operation in the middle of the sidewalk**

Parking management is one of the biggest challenges with scooter operations. Misparked scooters or groups of fallen over scooters can block pedestrians and those with disabilities. Our vehicles only enter the pedestrian zone when in the control of a trained operator. On the off chance that a vehicle has an issue, the pilot would be immediately aware and would send a team member to collect the vehicle.

- **Unlike scooter services, we require only a small number of vehicles to service the community**

In the City of Santa Monica, for example, where we are permitted to operate throughout the city without a cap, the new city pilot shared mobility pilot permits over 2000 shared mobility devices. We can service the whole city with significantly fewer vehicles. The appearance of our devices may raise questions, as any new technology will, but there will never be so many that the community feels overwhelmed.

- **Unlike scooter services, our vehicles are only operated by trained pilots**

When scooters were first introduced, almost every user was a new operator, which led to dangerous behavior for both the rider and those around them. This is never the case with our vehicles, as each operator is trained to safely operate the vehicles and to yield to pedestrians.

- **Coco provides significant public benefits**

- **COVID-safe, affordable delivery for Angelenos**

Most Angelenos are trying hard to avoid the risk of COVID exposure, and shopping can present exposure risk to those who have yet to be vaccinated. Coco is offering free delivery to both seniors and healthcare professionals during COVID-19, to help support those who need the service the most. COVID-19 has also been hard on local families, who are often juggling working from home while watching their children, who are also stuck at home.

Affordable delivery services like Coco, allow time-short parents the ability to grab a quick dinner or restock groceries easily without having to drive to the store.

- **We are an eco-friendly option**

There is no need for a two-ton, fossil fuel burning car to deliver a burrito one mile away, when a light weight, electric powered personal delivery device can make the same trip. The more restaurants and markets that shift their local deliveries from cars to Coco, the better for removing pollution from air, reducing CO2 emissions, and decreasing traffic and cars double-parked in bike lanes.

- **Coco supports local restaurants and retailers**

Covid-19 and inflation have had a tremendous impact on local restaurants and retailers. Now more than ever, they need convenient and affordable new options to safely reach their customers. Car-based delivery companies often take a 30% cut, which is unsustainable, but without other options, they have no choice but to use them. Because of the efficiencies of our delivery technology, Coco charges 20%-50% less. The affordability and reliability of our service has been greatly appreciated by our current partners in San Pedro and Venice, and as you would expect, we're starting to hear from restaurants all over Los Angeles who are interested in replacing their local delivery trips with our service.

- **Coco supports local jobs**

Our vehicles are always operated by real people. These are non-technical jobs that only require a computer and an internet connection, making it COVID-safe, and a more accessible job to those with disabilities than typical delivery services. Unlike many jobs with other delivery companies, our pilots are employees and not contract (gig) workers. Coco also hires local field operations team members. Currently the majority of our pilots and field operators are based in the Los Angeles area. Our service further supports jobs in the local economy by helping local restaurants and markets increase their sales and decrease the costs associated with traditional delivery services.

- **Coco can help the city track sidewalk quality and repair needs**

Our devices can provide updates to the city about sidewalk conditions and provide alerts when a section of sidewalk may be impassable or in need of repair.

- **Coco is community-first focused**

Establishing strong relationships with city representatives, residents, and local businesses is at the core of our mission. We look forward to continuing to expand our service here in Los Angeles in close collaboration with each of these groups. We would be thrilled to meet with any community groups you recommend and explore further ways that we can be helpful during these difficult times. We commend the City for the leadership it has shown in bringing innovative solutions to our current challenges, and believe formalizing the permit program is the next step in ensuring the success of this program.

Please support the ordinance allowing DOT to implement the Personal Delivery Device Pilot Program and issue permits to qualified pilot program operators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zach Rash', with a stylized, cursive script.

Zach Rash

CEO and Co-Founder Coco