



Eric (Roderico) Villanueva <eric.villanueva@lacity.org>

Re: dockless vehicle pilot coming to LA

1 message

Russell Howes <russell.e.howes@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 9, 2018 at 9:21 AM

To: michael.espinosa@lacity.org

Cc: Alek Bartosouf <alek.bartosouf@lacity.org>, eric.villanueva@lacity.org

+ Eric who was mentioned on Michael's OOO autoresponse

Eric, are you able to add this to the record for the council file?

On Thu, Aug 9, 2018 at 9:19 AM, Russell Howes <russell.e.howes@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Michael,

I was given your email by Alek Bartosouf. Can you please put this comment in the record for Council File 17-1125?
Thanks!

Dear Mayor and City Councilmembers, and particularly members of the Transportation and Public Works committees,

(First, I hope that future meetings discussing dockless scooters are held with sufficient notice. I was not notified of the Aug 8 transportation committee special meeting until Aug 7 when it was added to the file. No wonder your only public commenters for the special meeting included two obscenity-laden tirades and one lobbyist from Bird who wanted to draw attention to the 1900 identical form emails generated by its app. The public should be involved in this process and the public can't get involved on less than a day's notice.)

Today I witnessed yet another Bird collision on the bike path at Venice Beach. Two teenagers, clearly under 18, were riding in the wrong direction and toppled a girl (a foreign tourist) from her beach cruiser. The boys briefly stopped to see what happened but by the time the girl got up, they had already left. The Braude trail south of the city limit with Santa Monica is impossible to safely ride on during the day due to all the dockless scooters--some erratically driven, some haphazardly tossed wherever. In contrast, the Santa Monica portion of the bike path has been much more manageable since SMPD started ticketing illegal riders. As other public commenters have expressed, enforcement of existing scooter rules needs to be the top priority of the City Council with respect to the upcoming pilot program and draft regulations.

I am dismayed that the 'Enforcement' section of the draft guidelines concern quotas (which are a solution in search of a problem) and parking/drop issues. The primary negative effect of dockless scooters is the severe safety risk and that should be the top concern of these draft regulations--yet nothing included in the draft regulations (or discussed yesterday) will meaningfully prevent that. Forcing the scooter companies to display 'do not ride on sidewalks' in 48-point font is not going to reduce illegal rides on sidewalks. Traffic citations will. So will user bans and fines for illegal behavior. Holding the scooter companies responsible (with fines) for illegal rider behavior will help faster than anything else, since the scooter companies and their investors listen to money. Bird and Lime created this safety issue, and they ought to cover any needed cost of extra enforcement, whether through self-enforcement (remote disabling of scooters, bans) or fines applied toward LAPD staffing and overtime. **If they can't figure it out, they should not operate in Los Angeles.**

During yesterday's Transportation Committee meeting, one of the people in attendance cracked, "Are we going to [shift burden of enforcement to] Toyota too?" I'm not sure who made this shortsighted statement; I certainly hope it wasn't a councilmember. Toyota builds vehicles and sells them to operators; Bird and Lime provide a system matching operators with vehicles that they own, setting thousands of these vehicles loose without providing a way to ensure their usage complies with traffic laws. As much as an 'environmentally friendly last-mile solution' is good for the city, **safety needs to be a higher priority**. Somebody else in the meeting mentioned that 'government is really slow to respond to emerging technology'; as an employee of a Venice tech company I agree with this sentiment and want to add that 'disruptive' companies profit from the slow pace of government regulation almost as much as they profit from their beneficial technologies. Take, for example, Uber's model of ignoring airport laws (until enforcement started happening) or Waze directing traffic through residential streets, risking the safety of those streets' residents. It is clear that Bird and Lime are trying to skirt through this pilot program with as few restrictions as possible and it's concerning they have a front seat at the table in drafting these regulations; see, for example, the removal of the lock-to requirement after Lime's

weak justification for its infeasibility (the smart technology and GPS tracking obviate their objection; this should not have been removed.)

The safety problem won't be resolved until Bird and Lime enforce rules against minors riding, riding on sidewalks/bikepaths, and riding without helmets. Once the scooter companies fix these problems instead of paying lip service to them with unenforced Terms and Conditions, some of the other problems the regulations address will cease to be an issue. Parking will still be a concern, but it will likely be less of one because riders will be more disposed to park responsibly as demand among joyriders and minors will drop.

Bird and Lime's business models are negligent in that they provide a service that was obviously, from the very outset, going to be widely misused. Every day the City does not remedy this, more people will be injured, some seriously. I have used Bird several times and found it wonderfully convenient; I hope it becomes an asset to the community. Right now, it is a liability, and will remain so until their scooters stop injuring people (at least more so than bikes, etc.) and until the city does not bear the burden for enforcing scooter regulations and traffic laws. The city has a one-shot opportunity to craft regulations that will help dockless scooter companies be an asset to our city. Please make the most of it.

Sincerely,
Russell Howes