



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 4

COUNCILMEMBER ALEX PEDERSEN

September 8, 2020

Sam Zimbabwe, Director
Seattle Department of Transportation
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3800
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Request to measure scooter pilot program and report back to Transportation Committee starting in 2nd Quarter 2021

Dear Director Zimbabwe:

The purpose of this letter is to request, as chair of the City Council's Transportation and Utilities Committee, that SDOT report back to the Committee at least during the 2nd and 4th quarters of 2021 with the preliminary results of Seattle's newly approved, free-floating scooter share program using at least the performance metrics listed below.

I am sending this letter now, on the day my Council colleagues voted to approve your proposed scooter program, so that SDOT will be more likely to set up -- in advance -- the systems needed to measure relevant metrics for what SDOT is calling a "pilot program."

I support improved mobility options by encouraging environmentally friendly alternatives to gas-powered, single occupancy vehicles and electric scooters (e-scooters) could provide an alternative for some trips for some travelers. At the same time, the City government authorizing a new mode of transportation -- thousands of scooters onto our rights of way -- warrants a careful tracking of the changes.

The founding director of the Harborview Injury and Prevention Center, Dr. Fred Rivara, sent [a letter in August](#) to the Council to express his concerns about the scooter safety based on several studies from around the country showing scooters to be dangerous. While SDOT intends to conduct a safety study with Harborview, at the time of this letter, that proposed study is not yet ready, according to Harborview. Dallas, Texas recently [halted](#) their scooter program.

I was looking forward to a standard pilot project to measure results for scooters as we are seeing elsewhere in King County but, in my opinion, this SDOT program is not a detailed pilot and the legislation itself does not explicitly and fully address safety, financial liability, infrastructure costs, and measures for success.

SDOT said this legislation was time-sensitive, so I fulfilled my role as Transportation Committee Chair to facilitate discussion, ask questions, and enable my colleagues to vote on it. While a majority of my colleagues approved it, I was personally not willing to vote yes for something that, in my opinion, lacked details. Both [Council Bill 119867](#) and [Council Bill 119868](#) totaled only 2 pages in length. Having SDOT report back to the Council Committee on the following metrics will enable you to report consistently and thoroughly to the Councilmembers and to the general public on the pertinent details and results so that, together, we can evaluate this new program.

TIMEFRAME of "Pilot": The legislation as presented and adopted had no end date, whereas a pilot would normally have a specific timeframe to measure before and after results. Lacking a specific timeframe, I ask that you report back to the Transportation Committee with at least the following frequency:

- By end of 2nd Quarter 2021: present the preliminary results (see below for minimum metrics) as well as the final documents used such as the final permit (the Council Committee had received on August 19, 2020 a [version 1.1 dated July 2020](#)).
- By December 1, 2021: present the annual results shortly after the program’s one-year anniversary (see below for minimum metrics). Then annually thereafter.
- Additional presentations and updates are welcome, but please include at least the information requested below:

QUANTITY / USEAGE:

- _ Race and Social Justice analysis.
- _ Number of scooters and which types deployed. Detail when and where and by which companies.
- _ Number of scooters inoperable but deployed.
- _ Number of scooters used by customers.
- _ Number of trips per day.
- _ Average time scooter is rented.
- _ Demographic info available on customers.
- _ Average cost per ride charged to customers by scooter type.
- _ Other data on quantities/usage deemed relevant by SDOT.

SAFETY:

- _ Results of the “Joint Safety Study with UW / Harborview” noted on page 13 of your [PowerPoint presentation](#).
- _ Number and percentage of riders who used helmets.
- _ Number of injuries and deaths (if any) of scooter riders or caused by scooters, including types of injuries, such as how many concussions as a result of scooter use and whether those riders were wearing a helmet.
- _ The “incentives” used to have riders wear a helmet.
- _ Number of reports of obstructions by (parked) scooters.
- _ Number of traffic violation reports from scooters, including unauthorized use of sidewalks, parks, and other areas.
- _ Frequency of companies sanitizing their scooter during the COVID pandemic.
- _ Other safety metrics deemed relevant by SDOT.

COST / LIABILITY:

- _ Number of claims and/or lawsuits filed against the City of Seattle due to scooters and the details (amounts sought, amounts paid out, portion paid by the scooter companies, nature of the claims such as bodily injury or COVID-related illness).
- _ A full financial accounting of the scooter program including:
 - _ Amount of gross revenue generated by the scooter program, by vendor.
 - _ Amount of fees paid to the City by each vendor (initial and ongoing fees).
 - _ Line item infrastructure costs incurred by the City of Seattle for anything related to scooters (if shared with other modes, include each cost separately).
 - _ Line item operating costs incurred by the City of Seattle to administer the scooter program.
 - _ Other financial information deemed relevant by SDOT.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:

- _ Number of scooter riders / scooter trips using the scooter in place of other modes of transportation and which modes of transportation were replaced (such as single occupancy vehicles).
- _ The quantity, distances, and types of trips (e.g. commuting all the way to place of work vs. first-last mile to mass transit, etc.).
- _ Other environmental information deemed relevant by SDOT.

LABOR:

_ Confirmation that vendors are providing adequate safety, compensation, benefits, sick leave, etc. for their workers, using worker-friendly examples elsewhere in the country as a comparison.

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

_ Compare Seattle results to scooter programs in other cities. For example, the metric about number of scooter trips replacing a trip via a single-occupancy, gas-powered vehicle – how do the Seattle results compare to the results in similar cities with scooter programs?

_ How were the objectives, as stated in SDOT’s “Permit Requirements” for 2020-2021, met? Please quantify or state the degree to which each objective was or was not met:

- “Reduce Seattle’s carbon emissions by providing active, low-carbon, and congestion-reducing mobility options”
- “Ensure accessibility for and expand use by Black and indigenous people, non-black people of color, low-income people, immigrants and refugees, and people with limited English proficiency”
- “Be Safe and advance our Vision Zero objectives”
- “Ensure sidewalks are safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities”
- “Provide accessible and adaptive mobility options and expand use by people with disabilities”

_ Other measures and costs/benefits of a successful scooter program deemed relevant to SDOT.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS:

_ Key lessons learned from the scooter pilot (first 6 months and first 12 months).

_ SDOT recommendation on which vendor permits will, or will not be, extended and why (after first 12 months).

_ SDOT recommendation on whether the City of Seattle e-scooter program should be continued and why (after first 12 months).

Please contact my office with any questions about this request.

Thank you.

Regards,



Alex Pedersen

City Councilmember and Chair of the Transportation & Utilities Committee

cc:

- Councilmember Daniel Strauss, Vice Chair of Transportation Committee
- Dan Eder and Calvin Chow, City Council Central Staff
- Deputy Mayor Shefali Ranganathan
- Elliot Helmbrecht, Strategic Advisor to Mayor for Transportation
- Joel Miller, Micromobility Program Lead, SDOT
- Shauna Larsen, Council Liaison from SDOT