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11-13-21

EISENHOWER PARTNERSHIP

DATE: November 2021

TO: Alexandria City Council

FROM: Eisenhower Partnership

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Changes to the City of Alexandria Dockless Mobility Program

Dear Council Members,

We are submitting this letter in support of City Staff's proposed program changes to the City of Alexandria's Dockless Mobility Program. Over the course of the past year, the Eisenhower Partnership has taken an active role on the Dockless Mobility Taskforce and worked with City Staff to evaluate the current program and provide recommendations to improve the program on a go-forward basis.

The Eisenhower Partnership believes a permanent Dockless Mobility Program is an essential component for maintaining pedestrian connectivity across the City of Alexandria into the future. A permanent program will also provide the City the opportunity to ensure appropriate protocols are implemented for the scooter operators and citizens who use them.

Micro Mobility is a key component of the growth strategy contemplated in the Eisenhower East and West Plans. Scooters, bikes, transit and increased pedestrian activity will connect residential, retail, recreational and commercial areas along the Eisenhower Corridor and sustain development while tamping vehicular traffic. Micro Mobility will help create the placemaking elements needed for modern urban neighborhoods without having to add vehicular parking. The Partnership supports additional corrals at high density, retail and transit areas to support the mobility program.

The Eisenhower Partnership believes that bikes and scooters should be thought of together as we examine accessibility across the City. However, we need to recognize that the urban landscape within the City is different. While scooters on sidewalks may not be appropriate in Old Town where vehicular speeds are lower and block sizes are shorter; along Eisenhower vehicular speeds are greater. The Partnership supports scooters utilizing sidewalks for travel within in the Eisenhower Corridor area.

The proposed changes for the program will help in addressing issues related to improper scooter parking, deployment, rider safety and complaint management, which were key items raised by the Taskforce and community members while reviewing the current program this past year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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CC: Daniel Beason – Executive Director, Eisenhower Partnership

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2021

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: YON LAMBERT, AICP, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES RELATIVE TO THE SHARED MICROMOBILITY ORDINANCE (DOCKET ITEM 18)

This memorandum is in response to questions about the proposed Shared Micromobility Permit Program.

Q: Can the City's program require companies to provide devices with locks, or require users to lock the devices?

A: Yes, and staff has provided four options for Council to consider. Staff, however, does not recommend that this be included in City Code. The Task Force also considered a lock-to requirement and opted against it.

In October 2020, D.C. Council approved a bill to establish new rules and restrictions on dockless mobility companies. One provision of the bill is that devices must be locked to bike racks or other objects while maintaining at least three feet of unobstructed walkway. The bill also noted that the rule would go into effect in October 2021 to allow time for companies to update their fleets and for the City to install more bike racks.

The Task Force did discuss a lock-to requirement, but ultimately did not include it in their final recommendation for many of the reasons noted below. Staff is also not recommending that the City include a similar provision in City Code. This recommendation is due to several considerations:

- The locking requirement would not physically prevent users from locking the device to an inappropriate fixed object such as private fences or railings. Staff has concerns that the locking requirement would have unintended negative impacts on private property owners, particularly in Old Town and Del Ray where homes (and private fences and railings) directly abut public sidewalks.
- The City would need to significantly increase the number of bike racks throughout the City to provide appropriate places to lock the devices to. The bill by DC Council allowed one year for staff to install more bike racks and for companies to modify their fleets. City

staff would similarly need time to install additional bike racks, which would not be feasible by the April 2022 permit program start.

- Similarly to DC, the City would need to allow time for companies to update and modify their fleets to include devices with integrated locking capabilities, which would not be feasible by the April 2022 permit program start.
- The bill by DC Council took effect on October 1, 2021 and therefore has been in effect for 6 weeks. Staff plans to assess and monitor the success of the locking requirement in Washington, D.C. for at minimum one year before recommending that the City have a similar provision.
- Staff believes that expanding the number of parking corrals will meet the goals of a lock requirement by providing designated dockless mobility parking and ensuring that devices do not impede pedestrian or ADA access. Program permit fees cover the City's costs of managing the program and installing infrastructure (parking corrals).
- Companies do not have the ability to prevent users from "self-locking" or know when users "self-lock" (when users do not lock the device to a bike rack or other fixed object; therefore, the devices can be parked anywhere). Additionally, it is possible that the requirement would not achieve its intended goal of reducing impacts of improper parking on pedestrian or ADA access.
- Staff has concerns about enforcement. From staff's understanding, Washington, D.C. does not fine companies for un-locked devices, nor has an enforcement team citing infractions, and so there are no jurisdictions in the region that the City can look to for guidance on enforcement of this requirement. The San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Authority (SFMTA) has a locking requirement and enforces improper parking by deploying field investigators to respond to complaints about scooters. SFMTA investigators are authorized to issue parking citations of \$100 per occurrence to companies for not parking according to parking requirements. Staff would be concerned about enforcing this requirement without substantially increasing the number of bike racks or other appropriate places to park a scooter.

Council has four options for a path forward on this topic:

1. Direct staff to assess the lock requirement in Washington, D.C., and report findings to the Transportation Commission in spring 2023 for consideration to include in the City's program.
2. Direct staff to encourage this feature as part of the permit but not included it as a specific part of the City Code. This allows companies to start including this feature while allowing time for staff to monitor the DC requirement and install more bike racks.
3. Direct staff to make this a requirement of the permit but not include it as a specific part of the City Code. This allows for more flexibility in managing the program in response to changing technology.

4. Should Council wish to implement this requirement, the following language could be added to the City Code:

a. Add the following language to Section 9-16-11(C) as new #6:

6. Permit holders shall require Micromobility Device users to use the lock-to mechanism on the device to end a ride by locking to a bike rack or other acceptable object on public property in a manner that does not unreasonably impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic on a public roadway, shared-use path or sidewalk.

b. Add the following language to Section 9-16-12(A) as the new #7.

7. Every Device in operation shall have integrated lock-to capabilities.

Q: Can the City's program require companies to require their users to take a photo after ending a trip (parking)?

A: Yes, and like the lock-to consideration, staff has provided options for Council to consider. Staff, however, does not recommend Council include this provision in City Code. The Task Force also discussed this but did not include it in their final recommendation.

All companies that currently operate in Alexandria have indicated they are able to require users to take a photo after they end their trip. However, all companies have also expressed concerns with their ability to verify through photos that users have parked correctly. Companies that operate in Alexandria shared that in their other markets either 1) their employees manually review photos or 2) they are exploring using artificial intelligence (AI) to check photos for correct parking.

For companies that manually review photos, only a small percentage of photos are checked. Additionally, companies reported that some users either submit a blurry photo or a purposefully poor photo (e.g. the scooter is not visible) – neither of which can be used to verify proper parking. For companies that are exploring using AI to review photos, there are significant limitations in the technology's ability to accurately review proper parking at this time.

Through discussions with dockless mobility companies, staff has determined that the companies are not able to review end of trip photos for correct parking in a way that would improve improper parking at this time, and so staff does not recommend that the City require companies to review photos.

Staff anticipates that the industry and the companies' technology will continue to evolve and improve so that this may be a way for the City to monitor improper parking in the future. At this time, staff therefore proposes that the permit condition encourage companies to require users to take photos after ending a trip and review the photos for proper parking, rather than include this provision as a requirement in City Code.

Should Council choose to make this a requirement, the City could require companies to require their users to provide a photo. This would not require the companies to review the photos for proper parking. Additionally, the photo received by companies would not be enforceable.

Council has two options for a path forward on this topic:

1. Direct staff to make this a requirement of the permit instead of encouraging companies to do this, but not include it as a specific part of the City Code. This allows for more flexibility in managing the program in response to changing technology. (Staff preferred option)
2. Add the following language to Section 9-16-11(C) as new #7:

7. Permit holders shall require Micromobility Device users to provide a clear and legible photo of the parked device at the end of the user's trip to the company.

Q: When will Staff provide program updates to Council?

A: Staff plans to coordinate with Transportation Commission biennially to provide updates to the community on the program, including:

- The City Manager's cap on the maximum number of devices for the program, and the number of devices allocated or permitted to each company
- Average number of devices deployed ("on the ground") in the City
- Total number of trips by month
- Percentage of trips starting or ending in the City's equity areas
- Percentage or number of trips starting or ending near Metro stations or some high frequency bus stops (as determined by staff)
- Outcomes of events hosted by dockless mobility companies to provide education on safe riding and proper parking
- The status of planned or installed parking corrals

Additionally, Transportation Commission will review the program requirements and provide feedback on potential changes to make improvements. In their recommendation to Council, the Ad Hoc Scooter Task Force outlined potential program changes that will be explored and evaluated by staff for feasibility in the future. Staff would report to the Transportation Commission on these potential program requirements. Changes considered by Transportation Commission would allow for the community to provide input during a traditional public comment period and would be considered as needed as part of the permit renewal process. Related to specific Council comments, potential program changes that the Transportation Commission will consider include:

- Require companies to deploy devices with locks so that users can lock scooters and e-bikes to bike racks
- Require companies to require users to provide a photo at the end of a trip

Following input from Transportation Commission, staff can provide written updates to Council on the status of the dockless mobility program. The proposed permanent program will begin in spring 2022, and so Council updates would begin in early 2023.

Q: How will parking removal for the installation of scooter parking corrals be handled?

A: As locations for additional parking corrals are identified, staff will try to minimize parking loss. To date, no parking has been removed for corrals. All changes to the curb will be evaluated through the Parking and Curbside Management framework in the Alexandria Mobility Plan to determine the highest and best use for the space. Should staff identify that parking removal is necessary to install a parking corral, the changes will be considered by the Traffic and Parking Board public hearing, consistent with the Board's duties for reviewing any changes to parking. Should residents or businesses disagree with a recommendation by the Traffic and Parking Board, they have the ability to appeal the decision to Council for consideration.

If the Council wanted to make a final decision on parking removed for scooter corrals, the City Code will need to be amended to remove that responsibility from the Traffic and Parking Board since the Board is currently charged with reviewing any changes to parking. However, staff does not recommend changing the Board's responsibilities related to parking removal for scooter corrals. The process staff and the Board will use for considering whether parking removal for a scooter corral is appropriate is consistent with the process used for other parking removal that goes before the Board. This process includes a public hearing and the Board takes all public comment into consideration when making a recommendation.

