



DATE: February 25, 2025

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Andrew Singelakis, Director, 425-452-6468
Transportation Department

SUBJECT: Micromobility - Current State and Local Laws

On October 19, 2020, the [Bellevue City Council](#) voted unanimously to direct the Transportation Commission to “work with staff to review and, as deemed appropriate, recommend revisions to City Code regulating the use of motorized foot scooters in Bellevue” to be more consistent with the Washington State code and the codes of neighboring jurisdictions.

Following a November 5, 2020 study session with the [Transportation Commission](#) to introduce the topic, work was halted due to staffing constraints. Recent staff additions have enabled the Transportation Department to advance this work as originally directed by the City Council. Following the previous directive by the Council, staff will engage with the Transportation Commission in March and April of this year to advance the code amendment process.

Purpose

The purpose of the code amendment is to clarify and update regulations for motorized foot scooters and to advance the directives from Fall 2020. This will a) reduce regulatory confusion between state and local codes; b) respond to community and police concerns about micromobility devices; c) improve public understanding of personal and shared micromobility rules; and d) better align the city’s code with neighboring jurisdictions.

In addition to motorized foot scooters, staff also recognize an increase in community concerns regarding e-bikes and mopeds riding on sidewalks. Conversations with traffic police also reflected concerns about safety, citing a lack of clarity around regulations and the difficulty of enforcing micromobility devices. To address these concerns, staff have begun outreach with both shared micromobility operators and food delivery companies regarding e-bike etiquette. Staff have also developed an educational flyer on safe riding for public dissemination, given that trips made on two-wheeled devices make up an increasing number of deliveries in Bellevue. Though Phase 1 of the proposed micromobility program will focus on code changes for motorized foot scooters, additional outreach will be developed to educate the community about safe riding for all devices should this program advance into a shared micromobility pilot.

Overview of proposed changes

Bellevue City Code ([BCC 11.48.210](#)) defines and regulates "motorized foot scooter" – commonly known as e-scooters – differently from the state regarding their use, including where, when, how and by whom e-scooters can be operated. Pursuant to Council direction, staff propose consulting with the Transportation Commission to revise and update [BCC 11.48.210](#), better aligning the city code with state regulations and the codes of neighboring jurisdictions.

Pending Council adoption of the BCC amendments, staff propose engaging with the Transportation Commission to develop evaluation criteria for a potential shared micromobility pilot that includes both e-bikes and e-scooters. A previous pilot (completed in 2018 with the operator Lime) included only e-bikes; results from an online questionnaire developed by the city and distributed to Lime users in November 2018 indicated that 59 percent of respondents would like to see e-scooters *in addition to e-bikes*. Hence, a future one-year pilot with both e-bikes and e-scooters would advance the previously completed pilot done in 2018 with only e-bikes. A potential shared micromobility pilot would also align with the policy direction outlined in Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan:

- TR-13. Evaluate and facilitate car-sharing and micromobility-sharing programs.
- TR-105. Support the establishment and operation of a shared micromobility service in Bellevue.

State and local regulation of micromobility

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) broadly defines micromobility as any small, low-speed, human- or electric-powered transportation device, including bicycles, scooters, electric-assist bicycles (e-bikes), electric scooters (e-scooters), and other small, lightweight, wheeled conveyances. Shared micromobility reflects the expanding range of vehicles being deployed by private mobility companies in other cities for short, shared-use trips, including e-bicycles, trikes, e-scooters, seated scooters, and/or mopeds.

Washington State establishes default rules regarding where, when, how, and by whom micromobility devices may and may not be operated. For example, [RCW 46.61.710](#) allows e-scooters to be operated on highways and shared-use paths to the same extent as bicycles and class 1 and 2 e-bikes. However, local jurisdictions may opt to restrict or allow such use by ordinance. Bellevue City Code ([BCC 11.48.210](#)) further restricts the use of motorized foot scooters in Bellevue. Table 1 outlines key differences between how e-scooters are defined by Washington State Law and Bellevue City Code and where they may be operated.

Table 1: Comparison of State and Bellevue Regulation of Motorized Foot Scooters

| Regulation | State Law (RCW) | Bellevue City Code (BCC) |
|---|---|---|
| Definition of 'Motorized Foot Scooter' | A device with two or three wheels that has handlebars, a floorboard that can be stood upon while riding, and is powered by an internal combustion engine or electric motor that has a maximum speed of no greater than twenty miles per hour on level ground. | A device with no more than two 10-inch or smaller diameter wheels that has handlebars, is designed to be stood or sat upon by the operator and is powered by an internal combustion engine or electric motor that is capable of propelling the device with or without human propulsion. |
| Where may they be operated? | | |
| On Roadways | Allowed ¹ | Allowed only on roadways with speed limits of ≤25 MPH |
| In Bicycle Lanes | Allowed ¹ | Not Specified |
| On Sidewalks | Not Allowed, except where there is no alternative | Not Allowed |
| On Shared Use Paths | Allowed ¹ | Not Specified |
| On Unpaved Trails | Not Allowed ² | Not Allowed |
| In City Parks | Not Specified ² | Not Allowed |
| When may they be operated? | | |
| Daylight Hours | Allowed | Allowed |
| Nighttime Hours (dusk to dawn) | Allowed, with reflectors | Not Allowed |
| How may they be operated? | | |
| Driver's License | Not Required | N/A |
| Speed Limit | 15 mph max. speed on roadways and bike lanes | Not Specified |
| Helmet | Not Required | Required |
| Who may operate them? | | |
| Min. Age | 16 years ² | 14 years |
| Max No. of Riders | Not Specified | One |

¹ Unless restricted by local jurisdiction

² Unless allowed by local jurisdiction

These local regulations have several implications:

They functionally prevent the legal use of motorized foot scooters as a personal transportation mode in Bellevue, as they are prohibited from being used on most arterial rights-of-way.

1. They contribute to a patchwork of laws with neighboring jurisdictions, which are not widely known or intuitive to the public.
2. They preclude the provision of an electric, shared micromobility option available in surrounding communities and peer cities nationwide.

The Bellevue City Code restricts use of foot scooters between dusk and dawn and requires all users to have reflectors and wear helmets. Regulations surrounding other micromobility devices, including e-bikes, are outlined in **Attachment A: Regulation of Other Micromobility Devices in Bellevue**.

Regulation of e-scooters in other Washington cities

Shared micromobility programs have proliferated throughout the nation and internationally, beginning first with e-bikeshare and more recently with e-scooters. Table 2 reflects the regulation of devices in Washington cities that currently have shared micromobility programs. While only the four cities listed below have operators with active fleets of both e-bikes and e-scooters, other cities like Bothell, Tacoma, and Everett have also managed shared micromobility programs in the past.

Table 2: Shared micromobility programs in Washington state (e-bicycle/e-scooter)

| Code Allowances | Seattle | Shoreline | Redmond | Spokane |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|--|
| Max Allowed Speed | 15 mph | 15-20 mph | 15 mph | 15 mph |
| Speed Restrictions | Slow Zones | | First 2 Rides | Riverfront Park |
| Minimum Age to Operate | Not Specified | 18 | 16 | 18 |
| Limit One Rider | Yes | Not Specified | Not Specified | Yes |
| Helmet Required | Yes | Yes | No | No ¹ (for shared) |
| Program Feature | Seattle | Shoreline | Redmond | Spokane |
| Device Type | E-Bicycle E-Scooter | E-Bicycle E-Scooter | E-Bicycle E-Scooter | E-Bicycle E-Scooter |
| Fleet Size | 9,000-10,000 | 150-200 | 400 | 1,500 |
| Program in Place | Bike Share: 2017 Scooter Share: 2020 | 2024 | Pilot: 2019-2024 Permanent Program: 2025 | Pilot: 2018 Permanent Program: 2022; 2024 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Mechanism | Use Permit | RFP | RFP | RFP |
| Operators | Multiple | Sole | Sole | Sole |
| Equity Program Features | 10% Fleet Distribution in Equity Focus Areas Funding to Adaptive Bikeshare Program | Low Income Fares, Language Outreach | Lime Access (Low Income Fares/Cash and Text Payment) | 10% Fleet Distribution in Equity Focus Areas |

¹ Spokane's helmet requirement does not apply to app-based shared micromobility rentals used by people 18+.

Proposed timeline

During the upcoming Transportation Commission study sessions, staff will discuss candidate code amendment themes with Bellevue City Code. The following approximate timeline (dependent on Commission/Council calendar and subject to change) reflects proposed 2025-2026 activities:

- **Q2 2025:** Transportation Commission and staff will seek Council adoption of proposed amendments to BCC 11.48.210 and direction to develop a shared micromobility pilot that includes e-bikes and e-scooters.
- **Q3 2025:** Transportation staff will brief the Commission on the shared micromobility pilot that would include both e-bikes and e-scooters. A Right of Way Use permit will be approved under authority granted by the Transportation Director.
- **Q4 2025:** Transportation staff will approve one or more pilot operators for a one-year shared micromobility pilot that includes e-bikes and e-scooters.
- **Q4 2026:** Transportation staff will conduct an evaluation of the shared micromobility pilot that considers mobility data and community input. If Council determines the one-year pilot successful based on the developed evaluation criteria, staff will develop a permanent shared micromobility program with additional evaluation and engagement, as necessary.

Proposed engagement strategy

Staff propose a phased engagement approach for this scope of work. In Phase 1 (code amendment), staff will create a project webpage providing an overview of work-to-date and future work planned for micromobility, with a pre-recorded webinar detailing the intent of the code amendment and/or a Frequently Asked Questions section. Concurrently, staff will review candidate code amendment themes with the Transportation Commission, leading to a proposed Ordinance for Council action on the resulting BCC amendments. The public will have the opportunity to submit oral or written comments to the Transportation Commission on the proposed code changes.

Pending Council adoption of the ordinance, staff will then commence public outreach during the development of the pilot program. The second engagement phase may include public meetings, tabling at community events, and/or engagement surveys with community members. Pending direction from Council, staff will also return to the Transportation Commission to develop evaluation criteria for the one-year pilot.

Next steps

Staff are available for questions or further briefing. As per previous direction from Council, staff will direct next steps to Transportation Commission.

Attachment A: Regulation of Other Micromobility Devices in Bellevue