

**City of
Bellevue**



Transportation Commission Study Session

DATE: May 8, 2025

TO: Chair Stash and Members of the Transportation Commission

FROM: Franz Loewenherz, Mobility Planning and Solutions Manager, floewenherz@bellevuewa.gov,
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SUBJECT: Micromobility Code Amendments

DIRECTION REQUESTED

	Action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/Direction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information

On May 8, Transportation Department staff will present proposed amendments to Bellevue City Code 11.48.210: Motorized Foot Scooters and will seek feedback from the Transportation Commission. No action is requested.

INTRODUCTION

The Transportation Department is proposing amendments to Bellevue City Code (BCC) [11.48.210](#): Motorized Foot Scooters to better align Bellevue's code with state law in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), while also reflecting community needs and current market trends.

Staff first briefed the Transportation Commission on this topic on March 27, 2025. At that meeting, staff provided an overview of Bellevue's micromobility initiatives and progress to date, outlined the goals of the proposed code amendment, and reviewed relevant regulations from neighboring cities. These goals include:

- Promoting public safety
- Addressing community needs
- Aligning with state regulations
- Coordinating with neighboring jurisdictions

Since the initial presentation to the Transportation Commission, staff have launched a [project website](#) featuring Frequently Asked Questions and conducted several internal briefings with subject matter experts from various city departments. These included representatives from Police, Fire, the City Attorney's Office, Parks & Community Services, Community Development, Finance and Asset Management, and Transportation.

The proposed amendments below reflect the project's goals and incorporate feedback from these staff briefings:

- Amend the definition of 'motorized foot scooter' to align with the State definition.
- Broaden the locations where scooters may be ridden in Bellevue.
- Clarify the definitions of infrastructure types where scooter use is permitted.
- Extend the hours during which scooters may be operated.
- Establish speed limits for e-scooter use.
- Raise the minimum riding age to 16, consistent with state law.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSED CHANGES

Discussions with staff surfaced several key considerations regarding the proposed amendments, including their feasibility and alignment with project goals. A comprehensive list of proposed amendments is provided in Attachment 1. Highlights of selected considerations are summarized below.

Definition of Motorized Foot Scooter: Feedback from the City Attorney's Office emphasized the importance of closely aligning the definition of a motorized foot scooter with how it is defined in state law. In response, staff propose clarifying the characteristics of a motorized foot scooter by updating language related to floorboards, wheel size, and the number of wheels. Staff also propose adding a sentence to distinguish motorized foot scooter from e-bikes, as discussed at the previous Commission meeting. Additionally, outdated references to gas-powered combustion engines and 10-inch wheels will be removed.

- ➔ *Considerations:* Bellevue's current definition of a motorized foot scooter allows for both seated and standing scooters, as well as wheels 10 inches or smaller. However, market trends are evolving to include a broader range of e-scooter designs. Requiring scooters to have floorboards and small wheels may unintentionally exclude newer models – such as seated scooters - that offer increased rider stability but may require slightly larger wheels.

Where People May Ride a Scooter: Currently, motorized foot scooters are only permitted on local streets with speed limits of 25 miles per hour or less. This significantly limits their utility in Bellevue, effectively preventing their use for both mobility and recreation - despite their growing popularity. These restrictions also hinder the potential for implementing a shared micromobility program in the future.

Staff propose permitting the operation of e-scooters on roadways, in bicycle lanes, and on shared-use paths (except where signed as prohibited) in Bellevue. To enhance safety, sidewalk riding would be prohibited except where no safe alternative exists, consistent with State law. This approach also aligns with regulations in neighboring cities such as Redmond and Seattle.

- ➔ *Considerations:* The current code does not account for the growing popularity of e-scooters or their frequent use Bellevue streets. Without updates, e-scooter riding may remain functionally illegal, despite widespread adoption. Expanding permitted riding areas would better reflect

current usage patterns, address community needs, and support first-mile/last-mile connections with transit. Staff's proposal for e-scooter use in city parks is still under review, in coordination with Parks and Community Services (as noted in Attachment 1); an update will be ready for sharing with the Commission at its May 8 meeting.

When People May Ride a Scooter: Under the current code, motorized foot scooters may only be operated from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset. This is more restrictive than State law, which permits riding at any time, provided the scooter is equipped with reflectors. Amending the code to allow for expanded hours would reflect common practice in Bellevue and support broader access to this mobility option.

- ➔ *Considerations:* Permitting nighttime e-scooter use may introduce additional safety risks. However, some of these risks can be mitigated through rider education and by requiring the use of reflectors to enhance visibility consistent with State law.

Who Can Ride a Scooter: Bellevue currently has the lowest minimum age requirement for scooter riders in the region, allowing use starting at 14 years old. Staff propose raising the minimum age to 16 to better align with state law and to promote safer riding behavior.

- ➔ *Considerations:* State law does not set a minimum age for riding *Class 1 and 2 e-bicycles* but does require riders to be at least 16 years old for *Class 3 e-bicycle*. Although Bellevue City Code defers to State law for e-bike regulations, the lower age requirement for e-scooters may create confusion due to the inconsistency. Aligning age requirements could help simplify messaging and improve public understanding.

How Fast Can People Ride a Scooter: To ensure public safety, staff propose a maximum speed limit of 15 miles per hour, consistent with State law. Recent speed data from a popular city trail near Larsen Lake shows that 98% of users traveled below 14 miles per hour, suggesting a shared public understanding of safe riding behavior. A 15 miles per hour speed cap is also standard among most private scooter rental operators in Washington, which would support consistency if a shared micromobility program is introduced in the future.

Should Helmets Be Required When Operating a Scooter: Initial discussions with the Transportation Commission indicated support for maintaining Bellevue's existing helmet requirement for e-scooter riders, consistent with the city's helmet requirement for bicycle riders.

- ➔ *Considerations:* Bellevue's helmet requirement differs from both State and County policies, as neither currently mandates helmet use. King County repealed its helmet requirement in 2022, citing equity concerns related to disproportionate enforcement. Because youth citations must be processed through the King County Judicial Court, the Bellevue Police Department has noted that enforcing the city's helmet requirement may present practical challenges, despite the well-documented safety benefits of helmet use. Nevertheless, the City Attorney's Office has advised

retaining the requirement to serve an educational purpose and promote safe riding behavior. Notably, Seattle and Kirkland continue to maintain a helmet requirement.

A summary of proposed code amendments is provided in Attachment 1.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Commission's feedback on the proposed amendments to BCC 11.48.210: Motorized Foot Scooters, staff will present the draft code language to the City Council for adoption in Summer 2025.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 - Proposed Amendments to Bellevue's Motorized Foot Scooter Regulations