

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**

Recommended Bellevue City Code 11.48.210 amendments to revise the City's regulations on motorized foot scooters to be more consistent with state law.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****DIRECTION**

The City will present the recommended Bellevue City Code Amendment (BCCA), which incorporates input from the Transportation Commission. Following discussion, the City seeks Council direction to prepare the ordinance for final action as part of the consent agenda at a future meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Consider directing staff to finalize the BCCA Ordinance for final action as part of the consent agenda at a future meeting.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS****Background**

Bellevue City Code (BCC 11.48.210) defines and regulates “motorized foot scooters”—commonly referred to as e-scooters—differently from Washington State law, including restrictions on where, when, how, and by whom they may be operated. These differences not only create regulatory confusion but also effectively prohibit the legal use of e-scooters as a personal transportation mode on most arterial rights-of-way in Bellevue.

On October 19, 2020, the Bellevue City Council directed the Transportation Commission to work with staff to review and, as appropriate, recommend updates to the City Code to better align with state law and the codes of neighboring jurisdictions. While the Transportation Commission held an initial study session on November 5, 2020, the effort was paused due to staffing constraints.

Following a reprioritization of the Transportation Department's work plan, this effort has resumed. In accordance with the Council's directive, staff have collaborated with the Transportation Commission to recommend amendments to BCC 11.48.210.

**Bellevue City Code Amendment (BCCA)**

The City reintroduced the BCCA topic to the Transportation Commission at its March 27, 2025, meeting. During that study session, staff presented an overview of Bellevue's micromobility initiatives, reviewed state law and peer city regulations, and outlined the following goals of the recommended code amendment.

- Promote Public Safety: Encourage safe riding practices and provide clarity to law enforcement to

address traffic violations.

- Address Community Needs: Support emerging mobility trends including the recent rise in personal scooter use by providing clarity to the public and city staff on where and how these devices are allowed or restricted.
- Align with State Regulations: Address gaps in understanding the use of e-scooters, including where, when, and by whom they can be ridden.
- Coordinate with Neighboring Jurisdictions: Ensure consistency with regulatory frameworks in nearby cities such as Redmond, Seattle, and Kirkland.

Following the initial presentation to the Transportation Commission, the City launched a project website featuring a Frequently Asked Questions section. The City also conducted internal briefings with subject matter experts from multiple city departments, including Police, Fire, the City Attorney's Office, Parks & Community Services, Community Development, Finance & Asset Management, and Transportation.

At its second meeting on April 8, the Transportation Commission reviewed and confirmed the details of the recommended BCCA. A strike-draft is included as Attachment A. Key updates include:

- Amending the definition of motorized foot scooter: Updates and clarifies the definition of e-scooters by specifying characteristics such as the presence of a floorboard, wheel size, and number of wheels, aligning with state law. Outdated references to gas-powered engines are removed.
- Expanding permitted operating areas: Authorizes e-scooter use on roadways, in bicycle lanes, on shared-use paths, along paved trails, and in city parks—except where prohibited by signage. To enhance pedestrian safety, sidewalk riding is prohibited unless no safe alternative exists, consistent with state law. A new “dismount zone” provision empowers the City Traffic Engineer to post signage restricting e-scooter riding on designated sidewalks.
- Amending the helmet requirement: Removes the legal mandate to wear a helmet, aligning Bellevue's regulations with current state and county laws, which do not require helmet use. Helmet use will continue to be encouraged as a recommended safety practice through the City's website and outreach materials.
- Extending allowable operating hours: Allows e-scooter use at all hours, including nighttime, provided the scooter is equipped with reflectors to improve visibility, in accordance with state law.
- Raising the minimum riding age: Increases the minimum riding age to 16, aligning with state law and supporting efforts to promote safer riding behavior.
- Establishing a maximum speed limit: Sets a maximum speed limit of 15 miles per hour for e-scooters, consistent with state law.

The Transportation Commission endorsed the key themes of the recommended BCCA and its goal of establishing a safer, more consistent framework for e-scooter use in Bellevue, aligned with state laws and community input. The Commission also supports the BCCA's broader objective of promoting innovative, sustainable, and multimodal transportation.

### **Potential Shared Micromobility Program**

Prior to the Transportation Commission's April 8 meeting, the City received four stakeholder comment letters (Attachment B), all expressing support for the recommended BCCA. These letters also conveyed

interest in continued collaboration as the City moves from code amendments to launching a shared micromobility program, including e-scooters and e-bikes. In response to Commission questions, City staff noted that developing vendor permit requirements will require significant cross-departmental coordination to ensure a successful and well-managed implementation.

Pending Council's adoption of the BCCA Ordinance through a future consent agenda, the potential timeline for a shared micromobility program is:

- Summer-Winter 2025: City will determine vendor permit requirements.
- Spring 2026: A Right of Way Use Permit may be issued by the Transportation Director.
- Post permit issuance: City will monitor adherence to permit conditions.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan aims to "maintain and enhance a comprehensive multimodal transportation system to serve all members of the community" (Transportation Element Goal). Policies direct the City to:

- TR-13. Evaluate and facilitate car-sharing and micromobility-sharing programs.
- TR-31. Monitor and implement as appropriate, emerging technologies that are intended to improve mobility, safety, efficiency and people-moving capacity on existing and planned transportation network facilities.
- TR-105. Support the establishment and operation of a shared micromobility service in Bellevue.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with amending BCC 11.48.210.

## **OPTIONS**

1. Direct staff to finalize the BCCA Ordinance for final action as part of the consent agenda at a future meeting.
2. Provide alternative direction.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. BCCA Strike Draft
- B. Community input received

## **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A