



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

Chairman Howard Brookins Jr.
Committee on Transportation and Public Way
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Comments from the Active Transportation Alliance on the proposed e-scooter sharing ordinance

Active Transportation Alliance advocates for walking, biking, and public transit to create healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in the Chicago region.

We support a long-term e-scooter sharing program for Chicago because it would give people another option to get around other than driving or hailing a car. This program should complement – not compete with – the city’s publicly owned, thriving and expanding Divvy bikeshare system.

As neighborhood air quality gets worse and we continue to experience the heightened effects of climate change, Chicago officials must invest in a safer, healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable transportation system.

Alongside a Divvy bikeshare system that reaches all 50 wards, a long-term scooter program would be an exciting departure from a car-centric status quo that’s brought congestion, pollution, and traffic crashes and fatalities to our communities. But, for both Divvy bikeshare and the scooter program to be successful, city leaders must provide a network of safe places to ride on the street.

People riding bikes and scooters have the same primary concern. They don’t feel safe sharing the road with fast-moving cars and trucks. Unfortunately, very few Chicago streets have protection or separation from car and truck traffic.

The challenge is greatest for people in majority Black and Brown communities on the West and South Sides, where most of the city’s highest crash corridors are located. Streets are wider, destinations are further apart, and truck traffic is heaviest. It all contributes to dirtier air and more traffic injuries and deaths.

Nearly 10 years after Chicago’s Streets for Cycling 2020 plan was released, the city has only 25 miles of protected bike lanes on more than 4,500 miles of city streets. Less than three of those miles are on the South Side. Only 5.5 miles of protected lanes were installed over the last four years.

Physical separation is essential to making bike and scooter routes safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. A line of paint just doesn’t cut it. Protected bike lanes have proven to reduce crashes and make streets safer for everyone by slowing down drivers to more appropriate speeds.

Thanks to a new capital plan, more than \$150 million in city funds are set aside to build more walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. But there’s still no clear strategy to build a real, citywide network that will get people riding bikes or scooters from point A to point B safely and comfortably.

This ordinance does include a requirement for “sidewalk detection technology” that would alert users who are riding scooters on the sidewalk and potentially force them to stop. Sidewalk riding is a legitimate safety concern, especially for older adults and people with disabilities.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

But people ride on the sidewalk because they don't feel safe riding on the street. The best way to address this problem is to make the streets safer, particularly for vulnerable people walking, biking, and riding scooters.

Please establish a long-term scooter sharing program and direct the transportation department to advance a public vision for a citywide network of bike/scooter lanes that's comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. The time is now to rethink how we allocate street space and make sure the city's popular bike and scooter sharing programs are set up for long-term success.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

Kyle Whitehead (he/him/his)
Managing Director of Public Affairs
Active Transportation Alliance
35 E. Wacker Dr., Ste 1782
Chicago, IL 60601
312.216.0473
kyle@activetrans.org