

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #6 – Dockless Mobility Pilot

ISSUE: Update and public hearing on the 2019 Dockless Mobility Pilot Program and Draft Recommendations for a 2020 Phase II Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION: The Transportation Commission recommend that City Council approves a Phase 2 Pilot Program that incorporates the draft recommendations.

BACKGROUND: City Council approved the Dockless Mobility Pilot program in November 2018. The program officially started in January and permits were issued on a rolling basis with most operators obtaining permits and launching in April 2019. A total of seven companies have obtained permits and have deployed scooters. In August, the City Manager extended the pilot through the end of the year in order to evaluate data and compile a comprehensive report and set of recommendations for City Council in November.

As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is a requirement for the operating permit, operators are required to submit monthly data reports detailing operations and usage data. Data presented below provides a summary of the program through August 2019.

- **Registered Users: 30,000 active users** across all apps
- **Trips: Over 200,000** trips starting or ending in Alexandria
- **Miles Traveled: Approximately 195,000** miles
- **Average Trip Duration: 14 minutes**
- **Average Distance Traveled: about 1 mile**
- **Average Devices Deployed: total of approximately 780 devices** per day, half of the total maximum devices allowed by permit (200 devices permitted per company, 7 companies permitted)
- **Approximately 1/3 of weekday trips were taken during commuting hours**
- **Usage:** 60% of trips originated in Old Town, 11% in Potomac Yard, 8% in Del Ray, and 7.5% in Eisenhower East. Upon request, several operators, accounting for approximately 90% of trips in Alexandria, also provided the City with Mobility Data Specification (MDS) data which provides more details about scooter trips.

DISCUSSION: Scooters are permitted by our neighboring jurisdictions (Arlington County, Washington D.C.), are legal under state law and will therefore be in Alexandria. In order for the

City to have a way to manage scooter companies and the devices, Staff recommends a Pilot Program with updated requirements and regulations to ensure that this new form of mobility remains an option for the community and visitors while minimizing negative impacts on residents.

The City has developed draft recommendations that are based on community input, leading practices, coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and data from the pilot. The draft recommendations were made available for public comment via an online feedback form (non-scientific) from October 1 through October 15. Staff presented the recommendations to City Council on October 2nd for their input and is also seeking input from various Boards, Commissions and stakeholders on the recommendations before presenting a final recommendation to City Council in November.

Community Input & Outreach

The City has proactively engaged stakeholder groups throughout the pilot to gather input on scooters and the program. Among others, staff met with:

- Del Ray Business Association in August
- National Federation for the Blind in August
- Cameron Station Civic Association in August
- Alexandria business representatives in September
- Old Town community representatives in September

Since the beginning of the pilot, the City coordinated and hosted outreach events with the goal of educating the community on the program and scooter usage as well as listening to community concerns and gathering input on the pilot program. At four Scooter Education Events, staff arranged for scooter operators to be present to speak with and answer questions from the community, educate riders on safe use and give away free helmets at these events:

- Four Mile Run Farmers Market in August
- Southern Towers Farmers Market in August
- Old Town on King Street at Union Street in September
- First Thursdays in Del Ray in September

The City installed variable message boards (VMBs) along King Street in Old Town to educate riders on safety and to discourage sidewalk riding and has provided safety and proper parking information through social media posts, scooter hang-tags and in-app messaging.

Staff has also received a great deal of input about this pilot program including positive and negative viewpoints and ideas for improvements through Call.Click.Connect tickets (271), letters to the program email address (from approx. 450 individuals), phone calls, and meetings with community members and stakeholders.

In August, the City issued a Feedback Form to solicit input on the current program and considerations for how to improve it. Over 2,900 people provided feedback of which, 38% indicated they have ridden a scooter. The key findings from scooter riders were:

- 50% indicated that scooters replaced a vehicle trip (50% would have used a personal vehicle or an Uber/Lyft/taxi to take most of those trips)
- 26% most frequently ride in a bike lane but 53% would prefer to ride in a bike lane

- 67% indicated that using scooters has decreased their need for parking
- 60% agreed that scooters have increased their access to public transportation
- The most common reasons to ride scooters were:
 - To get around faster (59%)
 - Convenient and easy to access (57%)
 - To avoid parking (29%)

In addition to input from scooter riders, key findings from all respondents included:

- Top issues identified include incorrect parking (74%) and unsafe user behavior (66%)
- Top responses when asked about changes the City should consider included enforcement (52%) and banning parking and riding in certain areas (40%)
- 55% of respondents do not want scooters allowed on any sidewalks, while 45% of respondents think people should be allowed to ride on sidewalks in all or some instances (high pedestrian activity, roads with lots of vehicular traffic)
- Respondents who identified as having a disability indicated top issues are incorrectly parked scooters (75%) and speeding and unsafe behavior (70%)

Draft Recommendations

Because the scooter industry is new and continually involving, the City is recommending a Phase II Pilot for 2020 to allow more time to evaluate and manage options for this new form of transportation. If the City does not have a mechanism for permitting these companies and requiring that they abide by rules and requirements, the City will be unable to regulate the companies and devices that can legally be on Alexandria streets. An updated MOU will be presented to City Council with many more technical requirements, but the key recommended changes in the Phase II Pilot are noted below and will address the following:

- Unsafe riding
 - Update the City Code to:
 - Permit scooters on sidewalks unless explicitly banned (same as bikes)
 - Set speed limits to 15 mph on streets
 - Evaluate the feasibility of setting a speed limit for sidewalks
 - Limit one rider per device
 - Require riders under 14 years old to wear a helmet
 - Permit the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs to sign soft surface trails where scooters would not be permitted to ride
- Improper parking
 - Require operators to stage in a parking corral if one exists nearby
 - Install additional parking corral locations
 - Consider additional large areas with high pedestrian activity for no-park zones
 - Work with operators as technology develops for stricter parking requirements
 - Require braille and QR codes for ADA reporting of improper parking
- Promoting transportation equity
 - Require percentage of the fleet be deployed and maintained in areas identified by staff that provide more equitable distribution of devices across the City
 - Require participation in income-based discount programs
- Minimize costs to the City and improving opportunities for community feedback
 - Require MDS feed or some other more detailed compliant information

- Establish a City Manager appointed Ad-Hoc Scooter Task Force for duration of Phase II pilot
- Develop a streamlined “reporting” process with Call.Click.Connect auto re-routing
- Increase permitting fees for companies to park and operate scooters in the public right of way that better align with actual cost of program

Next Steps

Staff will consider input from the Transportation Commission, the most recent Feedback Form, and other boards and commissions in preparation of final recommendations to present to City Council in November. Staff is also finalizing an evaluation report summarizing the program. If the recommendations are approved, the Council would also be asked to approve City Code amendments to address some of ordinance changes and a resolution to establish an ad hoc committee to review issues and recommendations during the Phase II Pilot.

FISCAL IMPACT: The City collected a total of \$70,000 via permitting fees from scooter companies to park and operate in the public right of way. Staff estimates that the 2019 Scooter Pilot Program cost the City approximately \$65,000 which includes evaluation and management costs, installation of 13 scooter corrals, and data management. This figure does not include staff time to administer or enforce this pilot program. The City is still working to identify the actual costs of the program to the City in order to develop an updated (increased) fee structure if the Phase II Pilot is approved as well as updated requirements of the companies that will reduce staff time.