



Missoula Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board

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A Recommendation
on the Matter of

Electrically Assisted Bicycles, Electrically Assisted Scooters, and Shared Mobility Operations

Adopted
XXXX

Dear Mayor Engen, City Council, M. Gaukler, and M. Keene:

As Missoula grows, increasing the use of sustainable transportation alternatives to private hydrocarbon powered single occupancy motor vehicles (SOVs) is considered a necessity for our community to manage demand on our transportation network. The Long Range Transportation Plan includes a mode split goal of approximately tripling sustainable modes and reducing driving alone by half, just to keep traffic and congestion levels in check.

Currently Mountain Line, bicycling and walking are the only sustainable alternatives to SOVs, but the market is evolving. There is a significant and growing trend in the purchase and use of electric assist bicycles. We see these as a positive addition to the transportation mix. They are opening up bicycling to people with physical or time/distance limitations. Electric scooters are also available for private ownership, and are being used already in Missoula, though in lower numbers than electrically assisted bicycles. Along with private devices, there has been interest in Missoula among Shared Mobility Operators, though council has recently tabled that discussion.

We believe that electrically assisted mobility devices and the companies that provide share operations have potential for reducing the transportation mode share of SOVs and helping achieve the community's mode split goals. However, members of the public and City Council have expressed concerns regarding negative effects from a large influx of e-bikes/scooters. The primary concerns we have heard are the potential for interference with pedestrian convenience and safety, the personal safety of scooter users, and "sidewalk clutter," particularly in the downtown areas.

All three of these issues come down to how our public space is used, particularly our sidewalks and primary commuter trails. People ride bikes on sidewalks due to concerns about sharing space with motor vehicles, because there is not adequate bike infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. The state allows for sidewalk use by bicycles. Local communities may restrict (ban) their use in certain areas, but the ability to enforce restrictions would require significant levels of localized signage. The Board sees bicycles, and scooters, primarily as vehicles and sidewalks as primarily for pedestrians. Bicycle use on sidewalks is a factor in a significant portion of bicycle-motor vehicle collisions. Nevertheless, the reality

is that the City will not be building adequate bicycling infrastructure overnight, and a ban of bicycles on sidewalks can be expected to unfairly limit options and thus reduce the use of sustainable transportation.

As we look to the future, Missoula must find a way to fully accommodate bikes, scooters, and other smaller transportation options that will emerge to replace SOV trips. The Board believes sustainable travel modes (bicycling, walking and even scooters) can be best and reasonably served by sensible regulations regarding use of bicycles, scooters and other wheeled devices on sidewalks and shared use paths. We therefore make the following recommendations to City Council and staff.

- 1) Authorize the use of electric scooters within Missoula.
- 2) Set a speed limit for wheeled devices on sidewalks and the primary commuter trails.
- 3) Establish regulations and a pilot program for shared mobility companies to operate in Missoula.

Speed Limit Discussion

We believe a speed limit of 10 mph when within 30' (10 meters) of any pedestrian or upon entering a crosswalk would improve existing conditions and allow new mobility devices to be used effectively and safely. We see no reason to distinguish between the power source (muscle or electricity) regarding bicycles or other wheeled devices; the ability to cause damage/harm is based solely on kinetic energy. The speed limit should be citywide, rather than solely downtown, which would remove the need to have signage other than what we have posted at the main corridor entrances to the city about our restriction on use of hand held devices while driving.

Shared mobility companies can set governors on their electric bikes and scooters and can geofence locations where the speed is lower. We recommend including speed limit language in regulations for these companies and believe

Additionally, if/when share operations begin in Missoula, the Board believes it would be beneficial for the city to ask the share business(es) to provide use and etiquette “ambassadors” or “coaches” to remind share device users of restrictions and best/safest use. It may be possible to recruit volunteers for this purpose. This introductory “coaching” period could be from 1 – 3 months.

As for additional regulations for shared mobility companies, the Board believe that the permit framework in the currently tabled draft ordinance is a good start. We recommend further refining the City’s expectations of the companies and identifying a clear pilot project window after which any shared mobility program should be evaluated. We expect to be consulted before this item gets picked up off the table for further discussion and will make more specific recommendations at that time.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. We look forward to seeing more sustainable transportation options in Missoula and helping facilitate the transition to these new modes. Please feel free to ask for more information or attend a BPAB meeting to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Gene Schmitz
Board Chair