



The City of San Diego

Staff Report

DATE ISSUED: August 28, 2023

TO: City Council

FROM: Sustainability & Mobility Department

SUBJECT: Update on the Shared Mobility Device (SMD) Program

Primary Contact: Ahmad Erikat Phone:(619) 236-7072

Secondary Contact: Kristy Reeser Phone:(619) 236-7073

Council District(s): Citywide

OVERVIEW:

In May 2022, San Diego City Council adopted Ordinance 21467 (O-21467) to implement new regulations for the Shared Mobility Device (SMD) Program. Subsequently in August 2022, the City executed contracts with four SMD operators for exclusive use of City streets and roadways for operation of SMDs including scooters and bikes. Staff will present an update on the SMD Program, including ridership trends, equity programming, and corral infrastructure network improvements.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

This item is for information only.

DISCUSSION OF ITEM:

Overview of the SMD Program

Shared mobility devices (SMD) are dockless bikes and scooters that may be rented by the public via a digital application. Since the initial deployment of SMDs in 2017, these devices continue to provide a quick and convenient option for short neighborhood trips for enjoyment, work commuting, and access to recreational area, shopping, and dining. The SMD Program in the City of San Diego, managed by the Sustainability & Mobility Department, contracts directly with operators to provide SMD services in the City. The department coordinates closely with operators and the community to ensure compliance with regulations, monitor service deployment, evaluate program impacts, and support equitable access to these shared devices. The Adopted Fiscal Year 2024 Budget includes funding to support the \$365,000 of contractual expenditures for data portal management and enforcement services, and includes staff support for program management, corral installation, and rider enforcement. The Adopted Fiscal Year 2024 Budget also includes a projected \$1.3 million in revenue from SMD fees.

SMD Policy and Regulations

The SMD Program has evolved significantly since the first arrival of dockless e-bikes and scooters in the City. In response to the overnight popularity of SMDs, City Council adopted San Diego Ordinance 21070 (O-21070) on June 16, 2019, to permit, manage, and enforce rules for SMDs in the public right-of way. After additional community feedback, the City Council subsequently adopted Ordinance 21170 (O-21170) on January 30, 2020, to prohibit the use of SMDs on the City's Beach and Bay boardwalks.

From 2019 to 2021, the City had six, six-month permit cycles for SMD operations, with deployment growing to a maximum deployment of approximately 22,000 devices Citywide. Based on robust community feedback and engagement to implement operational efficiencies, address public health and safety, and service standards, the City Council most recently adopted Ordinance 21467 (O-21467) on May 24, 2022, to comprehensively reform the SMD program. This included a transition from a permit model of operations to a contractual model and introduced a requirement to stage SMDs in on-street corrals, added more geofencing and speed limitations, prohibited sidewalk riding and parking, and expanded enforcement standards.

The Evolution of the SMD Program

Concurrent with the adoption of O-21467, the City conducted an open, competitive procurement for SMD operators enabling the City to shift from a permit model to a contract model. In August 2022, the City executed contracts with four operators: Bird, Lime, Spin and Link. These contracts address SMD regulation compliance as well as deployment levels, technology standards, and equity programming. Each operator was allowed to operate up to 2,000 devices per day with a total not to exceed 8,000 devices City-wide. In February 2023, the City terminated the contract with Link for failure to comply with contractual requirements, and the remaining operators were each authorized to deploy up to 2,666 devices.

From August 1, 2022, through July 30, 2023, under the new program and ordinance, more than 595,000 SMD trips have taken place. This is far less than the 3 million trips that took place within the same period the previous year. The reduction in trips is largely due to the shift from a permit model to a contract model, which led to an overall reduction in the number of operators and devices on the market. On average, the number of available devices within the City of San Diego since the new regulations went into effect decreased from approximately 6,500 devices per day to approximately 2,500 devices per day. Despite the reduction in daily deployment levels, average utilization of each device has generally remained constant with approximately one trip per device. The average SMD trip distance is approximately 1 mile with a duration of 13 minutes.

A key program component since the regulations went into effect is expanding access and spreading geographic deployment of these shared mobility options. Currently, an average of 15% of devices are deployed within communities of concern per the Climate Equity Index, and staff are actively working to increase this to at least 20% by the end of the calendar year. Operators also have an array of accessible offerings to individuals such as adaptive vehicles, low-cost options for qualified riders, alternative payment options, and discounted rides for trips that start and end at transit stations.

To complement the revamp of the SMD program last year, City staff has been coordinating with the Transportation Department to expand corral infrastructure in the City. The expansion of the corral network is data-driven and prioritizes implementation along corridors with existing and incoming bike facilities as well as increasing SMD access in historically underserved communities. To date, there are approximately 950 corrals available in Downtown, Uptown, North Park, Balboa Park, Greater Golden Hill, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach, Pacific Beach, La Jolla, College area, City Heights, Linda Vista, Kearny Mesa, Clairemont Mesa, Barrio Logan and Southeastern San Diego. Additional locations are planned and being coordinated with new bike facilities and resurfacing projects within the City.

Setting the SMD Program up for Success

Since the implementation of new regulations and contracts in August 2022, the SMD program has continued to evolve based on changing trends in the market. The shift from a permit model to contracts, paired with the growth in personal micromobility device ownership and challenges with technology, have impacted overall deployment of SMDs in the City. Additionally, vandalism and theft have placed significant financial and operational strain on operators in the City of San Diego.

Staff continues to coordinate with the SMD operators to address many of the challenges that were faced in Year 1 of the new program. Significant efforts to expand the corral network have occurred to support deployment in more communities within the City. Additionally, staff continues to engage schools,

universities, community-based organizations, and planning groups to share information about SMD use. An outreach and education campaign is being developed to promote safe riding for e-bikes and scooters, support expanding ridership, and share information on the rules of the SMD program. As the micromobility market in the City continues to evolve, City staff is committed to exploring ways to improve and promote the use of shared devices as a convenient and sustainable mode of transportation. Collaboration with SMD operators and community stakeholders is paramount to the program's success and will continue to be a priority.

City of San Diego Strategic Plan:

The SMD program supports the Advance Mobility & Infrastructure priority area of the Strategic Plan. Micromobility options, such as SMDs increase access to public transportation, reduce the number of cars on the road, lower carbon emissions, and provide affordable, convenient methods of transportation for short trips.

Fiscal Considerations:

This is an informational item only.

Charter Section 225 Disclosure of Business Interests:

N/A

Environmental Impact:

This activity is not subject to CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2) as the activity is an informational item that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

Climate Action Plan Implementation:

The SMD program helps achieve the mode-shift targets identified in Strategy 3 by facilitating access to micromobility devices, providing connections to mass transit, and replacing short trips that might otherwise have been conducted by an automobile.

Equal Opportunity Contracting Information (if applicable):

Contracts with SMD operators include EOC program requirements.

Previous Council and/or Committee Actions:

The Municipal Code was amended on May 17, 2019, to include a section for Shared Mobility Devices (O-21070: Shared Mobility Device Ordinance) and the related fees were adopted by the City Council on April 26, 2019 (R-312433).

An update to the Municipal Code to institute a ban on the use of shared mobility devices on the Mission Bay Park Bayside Walk, and on the Mission Beach, Pacific Beach, and La Jolla Shores boardwalks was presented to Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on November 20, 2019 and adopted by the City Council on January 30, 2020 (O-21170).

The SMD program regulations were most recently amended by City Council on May 26, 2022 (O-21467).

Planning Commission Action:

N/A

Key Stakeholders and Community Outreach Efforts:

Key stakeholders include residents and visitors in the City of San Diego. Staff and SMD operators have conducted outreach throughout the City by participating in community events and providing stakeholder presentations to community planning groups and the Climate Equity Stakeholder Working Group.

Alyssa Muto

Director, Sustainability & Mobility Department

Casey Smith

Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Attachments: Ordinance 20170, dated May 17, 2019
Ordinance 21170, dated January 30, 2020
Ordinance 21467, dated June 27, 2022