

Press Release

Santa Monica Deploys New and Old Technologies to Improve Safety on the Sidewalk

City of Santa Monica and Mobility Providers launch GeoSamo to Prevent Illegal E-Scooter Riding on the City's Sidewalks.

Santa Monica, CA – April 1, 2020.

SANTA MONICA DAILY MIRROR | BUSINESS – After an extensive two year pilot and in coordination with Lyft, Lime, Bird, and Jump, the City of Santa Monica has launched GeoSamo, a first in country solution to prevent shared electric mobility devices from being ridden on sidewalks. This solution will increase pedestrian and rider safety, and aims to expand acceptance of dockless e-scooters and e-bikes by the broader public. The GPS based geofencing solution automatically slows down and stops e-mobility devices when they are on sidewalks. Along with new signage and safety oriented streetscaping, e-mobility users can now use designated “mobility” lanes and ride on the street, separate from high speed vehicle traffic.

The nature of dockless devices provides users with the ability to instantly rent a device anywhere they find it, ride it wherever they want, and leave the device wherever they choose once they have reached their destination. Until today, dockless mobility devices could be ridden anywhere including illegally on the City's sidewalks, and it has been extremely difficult and resource consuming for the City to enforce legal riding policies.

These factors have created a situation in which users ride the electric devices at high speeds on sidewalks and other areas that have significant foot traffic causing a significant safety issue for pedestrians like Sally Struthers, who has lived in the Wilmont neighborhood of Santa Monica for 47 years. *“Since the scooters appeared I have have felt unsafe on the sidewalks because of the menace of aggressive, high-speed electric scooter riders barreling toward me when I'm just trying to walk to the store or go for my daily stroll with my walking group.”* In addition to the the safety issues Sally describes, this conflict has affected the safety of the scooter riders. In 2018, There were 89 traffic/injury collisions involving e scooters; 21 of those incidents occurred on the sidewalk. There have been 1,447 citations issued to e scooter riders, 327 citations were issued to e scooters riding on the sidewalk, and 86 were issued to those riding illegally on the beach bike pathway. Additionally, these devices have caused significant backlash from a variety of community stakeholders. Despite these problems, these devices represent a key element of mobility in Santa Monica City's effort to transform into a climate friendly cityscape that is pedestrian oriented and de-emphasizes the automotive vehicle which makes this problem worth solving.

Per new City regulations and in collaboration with the dockless mobility providers, new e-mobility devices will be required to be equipped with advanced ‘dual frequency GNSS (global navigation satellite system)’ receiver devices that allow sidewalk level location accuracy in real time as a device moves along. This same technology is being leveraged in next generation phones, tablets, fitness wearables and vehicles allowing for ‘lane level’ vehicle and pedestrian location awareness. Dockless mobility providers have agreed to integrate red or *no-ride* zones into their apps which depowers the device and brings it to a slow and safe halt when ridden in one of these zones. City planners and leaders will determine where the *no-ride* zones will be established and will have the opportunity to update these zones as needed to stay current with mobility trends, public events, emergencies, and more.

“The City of Santa Monica was at the forefront of the dockless mobility revolution with the launch of shared e-scooters two years ago, so we are especially thrilled to be at the cutting edge of an innovation that will improve safety for pedestrians and riders alike,” said Anuj Gupta, Deputy City Manager of Santa Monica. “By requiring next-level GeoSamo GPS technology in partnership with our operators, we are ensuring that sidewalks remain safe for pedestrians, while reinforcing that e-scooters belong in the roadway. This underscores the City's commitment to providing a variety of safe, accessible and sustainable modes for residents and visitors to get around town.”

When a dockless device moves onto the sidewalk or any other area that the City has deemed a no-riding zone, the device automatically powers down and safely slows the device to a halt, forcing the rider to either abandon the device to or dismount and walk it to their final location. This takes the enforcement guesswork out of the equation

for the rider and creates a safe, device-free, pedestrian walkway that is free from the conflict between riders and walkers. In addition, the City has invested in streetscape infrastructure to vastly improve the safety and riding experience for e-scooter users, so they can ride on the street without fear of being overly exposed to automotive vehicle traffic.

In the words of Sally Struthers *“I’m delighted that the City’s new technology solution has restored sidewalks to what they were always supposed to be – safe places for walking. I’m gratified that the City has taken strong action to ensure scooters stay off the sidewalks by requiring that all of the companies adopt this new technology.”*

To learn more about GeoSamo and how it can improve your e-scooter riding or pedestrian experience, go to <https://dxhub.calpoly.edu/challenges/escooter-surface-classification/>

Customer FAQ (rider & pedestrian)

Q: How will I know if my device is about to shut down?

A: You will receive an audible warning from the scooter. It will begin to slow, and ultimately cease to function if it is in a *no-ride* zone. In addition, a notification will be provided via the e-scooter application on the rider's mobile phone.

Q: Will it keep me safe when it shuts down or breaks?

A: Yes, it will slow gradually and then ultimately stop allowing you to exit the device safely.

Q: Will this cost more when I ride?

A: No.

Q: Will violators get in trouble if their location is shown to be on the sidewalk?

A: Yes. They are subject to being ticketed by the Santa Monica Police Department, as well as account suspension for repeated violations by the operator.

Q: Is there a way that riders will be able to cheat or game the system?

A: No, the system has been sufficiently tested and cannot be tampered with.

Q: What about regular personally owned e-mobility devices? Are they held to the same standard?

A: These devices should not be in a no-ride area.

Q: Will this fix the problem of scooters and bikes blocking the sidewalks?

A: It should help this situation, as scooters not being ridden on the sidewalks will result in fewer being parked irresponsibly there as well. The City is also taking a number of other measures to improve e-scooter and e-bike parking, including the creation of more than 100 shared mobility parking zones across the city, and requiring operators to incentivize users to park devices in these zones at the end of their ride.

Q: The article mentions rider friendly street infrastructure, when will that occur and how much will it cost tax payers?

A: Plans for this infrastructure have begun, but there is no specific end date for this change. A major milestone in this effort is well underway, with the Bike Network Linkages Project near completion. This project—funded by grants as well as public right-of-way fees charged to the shared mobility operators— involves painting 19 miles of bike lanes green to enhance visibility and safety, as well as installing 1,000 bike racks across the city.

Q: What other zones and areas will the city make off limits to scooters? Can they shut down riders in my neighborhood?

A: Sidewalks, the beach bike path, city parks including Palisades Park and Tongva Park, and the Third Street Promenade.

Stakeholder FAQ (Management, Staff, Elected's)

Q: How much will this cost the city?

A: There is no cost to the city for GeoSamo.

Q: Have you tested this yet? How will we know that riders won't be able to break or game the system?

A: Yes, it has been sufficiently tested.

Q: How do we know it's accurate enough to keep people off of a 3' wide sidewalk and not shut them down while they are on the street?

A: The solution has been tested and verified that it has sidewalk accuracy.

Q: The city isn't actually in to GPS technology development. Are their partnerships that we are leveraging to make this happen?

A: The dockless mobility companies have partnerships with GPS technology companies.

Q: Have all of the dockless providers signed on so far? How can we verify that each device is actually equipped with this capability?

A:

Yes, all have said they will comply and utilize this solution.

Q: Will we be able to get our hands on the rider data so we can use it for planning and infrastructure investment purposes?

A: Yes, dockless mobility providers are required to share data with the City.

Q: Are we on the hook to install or allow the installation of additional communication infrastructure like 5G repeaters or other sensor or data networking equipment?

A: No

Q: Will this impact our tourism industry if we regulate e-mobility too tightly?

A: Unknown, but if anything having safe sidewalks should help tourism.

Q: How will we go about planning and implementing the 'no-rider' zones? Will the public have an opportunity to weigh in?

A: They are all Sidewalks, the beach bike path, city parks including Palisades Park and Tongva Park, and the Third Street Promenade.

Q: Will we plan to change any other e-mobility laws like the minimum age of ridership now that it is safer?

A: There are no plans at this time.