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Walk San Francisco Urges Dockless Scooter Companies to take Responsible Steps Towards Public Safety

Dockless scooters break California vehicle codes without penalty

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (Thursday, April 11, 2018) – Walk San Francisco, the 20-year-old organization that advocates for safe streets and sidewalks, sent a letter on April 11 to the three dockless scooter companies — Bird, Lime, and Spin — currently operating in San Francisco, urging them to take immediate action to follow California Vehicle Code 21235, which prohibits riding motorized scooters on sidewalks and parking them in a way that blocks pedestrian mobility.

“San Francisco’s sidewalks must remain a safe, protected space for people to walk. Suddenly, motorized vehicles are zooming along the sidewalks. That’s unsafe, and it’s illegal,” said Jodie Medeiros, executive director of Walk San Francisco.

“People walking on the sidewalk are getting hit by these scooters. The scooters are littering the sidewalks and creating hazards. We will not tolerate this.”

Walking home from his 63rd birthday dinner, Hayes Valley resident Scott Polizzi ended up taking a trip to the emergency room after tripping over a dockless motorized scooter. It isn’t the way anyone wants to spend their birthday. And he’s more concerned for his neighbors.

“I live next to a senior center, and I’m more concerned for the seniors who might break an ankle or worse yet, fracture their hip from tripping over one of these scooters. Sidewalks need to be respected, and cleared for space to walk. We have so little space already.” said Polizzi.

Medeiros said that Scott’s is one of numerous accounts she’s heard and she and her staff had also had personal experience with dockless scooters riding on the sidewalks and endangering pedestrians.

Walk San Francisco has started an album of photos on Facebook (see [facebook.com/walksf](https://www.facebook.com/walksf)) of motorized scooters in violation of California Vehicle code 21235, traveling on the sidewalk and parked in the public right of way, impeding travel.

"It's possible these new vehicles could become a valuable part of the transportation ecosystem in San Francisco, but the companies that are putting them on our streets and sidewalks need to prioritize public safety," said Medeiros. "The bottom line is, safety must come first."

Walk San Francisco supports a proposed ordinance by Supervisors Aaron Peskin and Jane Kim, which would enable San Francisco to create a permit system for the scooters, and to impose fines on noncompliant companies. The ordinance is expected to be heard by the full Board of Supervisors at the end of April. Medeiros added that Walk San Francisco is working with San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) to plan the permit system.

Supervisor Kim added, "Supporting eco-friendly modes of transit is forward-thinking and necessary to relieve gridlock and reduce the number of cars on the roads. However, we must permit and approve e-scooter companies before they operate in San Francisco to ensure safety and good neighbor policies. We should remove these scooters immediately until we implement common-sense rules to keep people safe."

The proposed ordinance will be considered at the Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, April 16, and a new Emerging Technology Task Force, proposed by Supervisor Yee, will also be considered on Wednesday, April 11 at the Rules Committee. Medeiros said Walk San Francisco would attend and speak in support at both meetings.

Though the companies' apps do apparently include the information that riding on the sidewalk is illegal, it is clearly not enough, said Medeiros. Many people are still riding on the sidewalk. More is needed to educate their customers. One idea, she said, would be to print "ILLEGAL TO RIDE ON THE SIDEWALK" in large letters on the scooters themselves.

"It's time for these scooter companies to be operating in good standing by taking immediate actions to keep people safe, and keep our sidewalks clear," said Medeiros.

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Walk San Francisco and its members have been making San Francisco's streets safer and more enjoyable for people of all ages and abilities for 20 years. [WalkSF.org](https://www.walksf.org)

