

ROLLING IN: After delays in citywide rollout, electric scooters could come to Chicago neighborhoods as soon as next week

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1102 words

9 June 2022

Chicago Tribune

Final 5

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Electric scooters could be authorized in Chicago's neighborhoods as soon as next week, after delays in a plan to roll out scooters outside the central part of the city.

Scooter companies Lime, Spin and Superpedestrian were initially set to receive permits from the city effective May 10, but they had not been issued as of Tuesday, according to the Chicago Department of Transportation. In the meantime, two scooter companies that applied but were not selected to participate in the program filed appeals with the city.

A Spin spokeswoman said Tuesday the company had just gotten permission from the city to launch, and they expected their scooters to begin hitting the streets Monday and then scale up over several weeks. Superpedestrian expected permits to be issued early next week, and planned to begin operating their scooters later in June, said Vice President of Public Policy Paul White.

Lime, Spin and Superpedestrian were set to operate outside the broader downtown area to start, while the Divvy bike-share system, operated by Lyft, was allowed sole operation of scooters in the center of the city for the first months of the program. Because Divvy is operated under a separate contract, its scooters have already hit the streets and are available south of Armitage Avenue, east of Damen Avenue and north of Pershing Road.

The rollout of all four companies' scooters will mark the city's first full-fledged scooter program, details of which were announced in April. It follows two e-scooter pilots. After the April announcement, scooter companies Bird and Helbiz, which were among three applicants who were not chosen for the scooter program, appealed their failure to be selected. The city is waiting on a hearing officer's recommendation on Helbiz's appeal, and a status hearing on Bird's appeal is scheduled for Monday, according to the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection.

Bird, which participated in the earlier pilot programs, was "disappointed by the initial outcome" of the city's scooter selection process, Vaughn Roland, senior government partnerships manager for the company, said in a statement. He characterized the appeal as "an attempt to bring transparency to what is currently an opaque process," and said he looked forward to working with the city to bring scooters to Chicago.

"Bird, city residents and community organizations are entitled to transparency with regard to city-run programs and have a legal right to obtain information that justifies the results of the selection process and demonstrates this was a fair, just and lawful process," he said in a

statement. "Unfortunately, our numerous attempts to obtain such clarifying information through channels such as public records requests were rebuffed or ignored."

Helbiz did not respond to a request for comment.

Lime viewed the appeal as detrimental to city residents, said Lee Foley, the company's Midwest director of government and community relations.

"They are creating an environment where people who need affordable and sustainable options, especially on the South and West sides, are being denied that," he said.

Lime also participated in the city pilot programs, and an uncertain return date and the inability to be consistently present in city neighborhoods means people are less likely integrate scooters into their daily routines, he said.

In a neighborhood such as Riverdale, where there is little public transit, scooters can fill in transit gaps, especially during the warm summer months, Foley said. There is also urgency to get scooters on the streets to provide an option to cars as gas prices skyrocket, he said.

Superpedestrian is taking a longer-term view.

"It's a marathon, not a race," White said. "We're focused on long-term viability and sustainable operations."

To start, Superpedestrian plans to focus on service in neighborhoods such as North Lawndale, Little Village and Wrigleyville, he said. Lime, Spin and Superpedestrian are required to deploy half their scooters in "equity priority areas," which cover many South and West side neighborhoods, the city has said.

The companies can apply to operate scooters downtown once they have been up and running for 60 days, CDOT spokeswoman Susan Hofer said. The move was intended to manage the devices in a place typically crowded with pedestrians, city officials have said.

Lime and Spin intend to charge \$1 to unlock the scooter and \$0.39 per minute for standard rides, and Superpedestrian's standard pricing is set to be \$1 to unlock and \$0.35 per minute, CDOT has said.

Divvy's standard pricing is \$1 to unlock and \$0.39 per minute for nonmembers, while members pay nothing to unlock and \$0.25 per minute. When Divvy rolled out its scooters downtown, it also changed prices for its bike programs. Prices for members went up one cent per minute for both classic pedal bikes and e-bikes. For nonmembers, unlock fees for classic and e-bikes were reduced from \$3.30 to \$1, and per-minute prices rose. Classic bike ride prices went up by one cent per minute, and a free 30 minutes was eliminated.

E-bikes went up from \$0.20 per minute to \$0.39 per minute, and a zone where fees were waived that covered much of the West and South sides was eliminated. Instead, Divvy said Wednesday

customers who rode in the former waiver zone would, for a time, get a \$5 monthly credit to apply toward e-bike minutes, unlock fees and out-of-station fees for rides that start and end in the area.

Bikes and scooters are available at discounted rates under the bike-share system's program for low-income residents, and the city and Lyft are providing \$10 e-bike credits monthly for a year to program participants.

Scooters are banned from sidewalks and must be locked to a fixed object at the end of a ride. All scooters are set to have cable-locking technology, and technology to detect riding on sidewalks.

Divvy scooters can be docked at stations, and to encourage docking a fee of \$1 for members and \$2 for nonmembers is charged for parking elsewhere.

Scooters are not allowed on the Lakefront Trail, The 606, the Riverwalk or at Navy Pier.