

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance

United for a Barrier-Free Society for All People with Disabilities

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Riding Electric Scooters in London is Dangerous and Must Remain Banned

AODA Alliance brief to the City of London Civic Works Committee

August 27, 2021

Via email: cwc@london.ca

On its agenda for its August 31, 2021 meeting, the Civic Works Committee of London City Council has an agenda item regarding the possibility of allowing electric scooters (e-scooters) in the City of London. The AODA Alliance submits this brief to London's Civic Works Committee on that agenda item, and requests an opportunity to make a presentation or deputation at that meeting via whatever virtual platform is being used.

In summary, London City Council must not unleash dangerous e-scooters in London. Riding e-scooters in public places in London is now banned and remains banned unless City Council legalizes them.

The non-partisan [AODA Alliance](#) has played a leading role in raising serious disability safety and accessibility concerns with e-scooters. To learn more about the AODA Alliance's advocacy efforts to protect people with disabilities and others from the dangers that e-scooters pose, visit its [e-scooters web page](#).

The AODA Alliance strongly commends the London Accessibility Advisory Committee for recommending that e-scooters should not be allowed in London. The AODA Alliance asks the City of London Civic Works Committee to follow that advice, and to recommend the following:

1. London should not permit the use of e-scooters, and should not conduct a pilot project with e-scooters.
2. If the City of London is going to explore the possibility of allowing e-scooters, e-scooters should not be permitted if they present any risk to the health or safety of people with disabilities, seniors, children or others, or if they are prone to create new accessibility barriers that would impede people with disabilities within London.
3. At the very least, if this issue is not simply taken right off the table, before proceeding any further, City staff should investigate the dangers that e-scooters pose

for people with disabilities, seniors, children and others. A public consultation on that issue should be held, beyond a purely online digital survey form.

London should benefit from the extensive and commendable work done on this issue in Toronto. This past spring, Toronto City Council voted unanimously not to allow e-scooters, after very extensive consideration of the issue. Toronto City Staff undertook the most thorough investigation of this issue of any Ontario municipality, as far as we have been able to discover.

An initial July 2020 Toronto City Staff Report, supplemented by a second February 2021 Toronto City Staff report, together amply show that e-scooters endanger public safety in communities that have permitted them. Riders and innocent pedestrians get seriously injured or killed. They especially endanger seniors and people with disabilities. Blind people cannot detect silent e-scooters that can accelerate at them at over 20 KPH, driven by unlicensed, untrained, uninsured, unhelmeted fun-seeking riders. Left strewn on sidewalks, e-scooters are tripping hazards for people with vision loss and an accessibility nightmare for wheelchair users.

It is no solution to just ban e-scooters from sidewalks. The Toronto City Staff reports, referred to above, document the silent menace of e-scooters continuing to be ridden on sidewalks in cities that just ban them from sidewalks. London would need police officers on every block. Toronto City Staff reported to Toronto City Council last summer that no city that allows e-scooters has gotten enforcement right.

E-scooters would cost taxpayers a great deal. This would include new law enforcement, OHIP for treating those injured by e-scooters, and lawsuits by the injured. London has far more pressing budget priorities.

Especially with COVID still raging, London City Council should not be considering the legalization of dangerous e-scooters. In Toronto, a stunning well-funded behind-the-scenes feeding frenzy of back-room pressure by corporate lobbyists for e-scooter rental companies had inundated City Hall with for months. The corporate lobbyists want to make money on e-scooter rentals, laughing all the way to the bank, while injured pedestrians sob all the way to hospital emergency rooms. That the Toronto City Council unanimously said no to e-scooters despite this massive corporate lobbying should signal to London how important it is to stand up for people with disabilities and others endangered by e-scooters.

London City Council should not conduct an e-scooter pilot. A pilot to study what? How many of people living in or visiting London will be injured? We already know they will, from cities that have allowed them. It would be immoral to subject people in London to a City-wide human experiment, especially without their consent, where they can get injured. The call for a "pilot project with e-scooters is just the corporate lobbyists' ploy to try to get their foot firmly planted in the door, so it will be harder to later get rid of e-scooters.

London, like the rest of Ontario, already has too many disability barriers that impede accessibility for people with disabilities. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires London and the rest of Ontario to become accessible to people with disabilities by 2025.

To allow e-scooters would be to make things worse, not better, by creating new barriers impeding people with disabilities.

E-scooters create problems for businesses, as well as for people with disabilities. That is why Toronto's Broadview Danforth BIA made an April 26, 2021 submission to the City of Toronto, set out below, that urged that e-scooters not be allowed. That BIA includes a part of Toronto that has similarities to downtown London.

Since we allow bikes, why not e-scooters? An e-scooter, unlike a bike, is a motor vehicle. As such, they should not be exempt from public safety regulations that apply to motor vehicles. A person who has never ridden an e-scooter can hop on one and instantly throttle up to race over 20 KPH. A person cannot instantly pedal a bike that fast, especially if they have never ridden a bike. In any event, London already has bikes. It does not need the dangers of e-scooters.

The [July 2020 Toronto City Staff Report](#) shows that e-scooters do not bring the great benefits for reduced car traffic and pollution that the corporate lobbyists for e-scooter rental companies claim.

London should now call a stop to its exploration of e-scooters. Its residents with disabilities, its seniors and others should not have to mount an advocacy effort like the one that was necessary in Toronto to prevent the City from exposing its residents and visitors to the proven dangers that e-scooters pose. This is so especially while they along with all others must continue trying to cope with the pandemic.

Please make London easier and not harder for people with disabilities, seniors and others to get around. Protect those who need safe, accessible streets and sidewalks, not the interests of corporate lobbyists.

These references to banning e-scooters do not refer to the very different scooters that some people with disabilities use for mobility devices. Those mobility devices are now permitted and of course, should remain permitted.

Learn more about the dangers that e-scooters pose to people with disabilities, seniors, children and others, by visiting the AODA Alliance [e-scooter web page](#) and by watching the AODA Alliance's short, [captioned video](#) on this issue. Read the AODA Alliance's [March 30, 2021 detailed brief](#) to Toronto City Council on e-scooters. Read the January 22, 2020 [open letter](#) to all municipalities and to Premier Doug Ford co-signed by 11 disability organization, that oppose e-scooters in Ontario.

Learn more about the AODA Alliance by visiting www.aodaalliance.org, by following @aodaalliance on Twitter, by visiting our Facebook page at www.facebook.com or by emailing us at aodafeedback@gmail.com.

April 26, 2021 Written Submission to the City of Toronto by the Broadview Danforth Business Improvement Area

April 26, 2021

TO: Infrastructure and Environment Committee Clerk

FROM: The Broadview Danforth BIA

RE: Item: 1E21.7 Pilot Project: Electric Kick-Scooters

I'm writing on behalf of the 355 business members in the Broadview Danforth BIA to support the recommendation being made by the General Manager, Transportation Services to decline the option to participate in O.Reg 389/19 Pilot Project for Electric Kick-Scooters. Our comments below can be shared with the Infrastructure and Environment Committee — meeting on April 28, 2021.

We have reviewed the components related to this proposed pilot project and have serious concerns that it would be very difficult to implement in a manner consistent with public safety and order.

Following a presentation made by Janet Lo from Transportation Services to BIAs, our key concerns are as follows:

Safety issues related to people with disabilities who use our sidewalks and wouldn't be able to safely continue doing so if e-scooters were allowed on sidewalks.

Safety issues related to all people using sidewalks — the potential of e-scooters being left on the sidewalks or tied to benches, tree guards etc. and falling over will lead to potential tripping hazards.

Lack of clarity on insurance coverage for riders, e-scooter rental companies and the general public who may be injured by e-scooter riders. Lack of City/police resources to enforce any kind of e-scooter laws. At the moment we have cyclists improperly using the roads and bike lanes and enforcement is almost non-existent. It's impossible to believe that enforcement will be available for e-scooters. Our businesses are fighting for their survival during this pandemic and the last thing we need is for customers to feel unsafe using our sidewalks.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our feedback on this issue.

Albert Stortchak
Board Chair
Broadview Danforth BIA