

The Oregonian

Portland now has e-scooters with seats and bigger tires

By Andrew Theen

June 14, 2019

You may now take a seat.

Portland will soon have hundreds of seated electric scooters available to rent on city streets.

The Bureau of Transportation on Friday announced it approved permits for two companies, Razor and Shared, to operate a seated e-scooter fleet here.

The seated devices are the first so far in Portland, but at least one of the companies has fleets in eight other cities.

In a statement, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said Portland wanted to make the scooter fleet more accessible for people who might not be able to stand on the existing devices. “There is still a significant amount of work to be done to achieve equity in transportation,” she said, “but the addition of seated e-scooters to our local fleet opens up this mode of transport to many more Portlanders.”

The scooters are also an option for able-bodied riders who would rather sit than stand. The scooters have larger wheels and wider tires, according to a city statement. Riders must obey the same regulations in place for other devices, including a 15 mile per hour maximum speed and helmet and sidewalk laws.

Razor, a California-based company, may have as many as 525 vehicles. According to the company’s smart-phone app, scooters are already on Portland streets. Tacoma-based Shared may have up to 200 devices, but they don’t appear to be in town yet. Portland will be the first market for Shared.

With the two additional companies, Portland now has five companies approved to deploy a collective 1,975 scooter fleet in town. That’s still fewer devices than the more than 2,000 scooters permitted during the four-month trial period from 2018.

Portland has said it would allow scooter companies to add more devices in 2019 if they meet a series of guidelines designed to incentivize ridership in east Portland and keep scooters out of public parks. If companies achieve those goals, Portland said it could feasibly see 9,000 scooters citywide. That hasn’t happened yet.

Portland is a few months into a one-year scooter trial that will run until April 26, 2020. The city said it would evaluate the program again in 2020 and determine whether to welcome scooters to town permanently.

Portland city attorney Tracy Reeve returns award for not speaking up about racist remark

By Gordon Friedman

June 14, 2019

Tracy Reeve, the Portland city attorney, has returned a professionalism award to the Multnomah Bar Association after one of her deputies made a racist remark at the award ceremony and which Reeve did not rebuke during her acceptance speech.

“I apologize to the MBA board for my own lack of professionalism in failing to publicly repudiate Simon’s remarks that evening,” Reeve wrote in a June 6 letter, referring to the deputy, Simon Whang, who introduced Reeve before her speech.

Whang wrote his own letter to the bar association board and said he had made “a joke intended to be edgy, that was, in fact, tasteless and offensive.”

He sent a separate email to the board, obtained by The Oregonian/OregonLive, that included “the offending part of my joke,” which conflated the N-word and the F-word:

"Professionalism connotes proper, rigid. That’s not Tracy at all.

Soon after I started at the City, I’m in a team meeting about a case with a bunch of litigators, including Tracy, and while we’re talking she casually says the N-word. [pause]

F-word. That should be F-word, not N-word. Granted it was litigators so everyone was using the F-word.

That’s a bad typo. Spell check doesn’t catch that. Tracy, I’m sorry about the 4 seconds everyone thought you were a racist."

Whang said Reeve was not in on the joke, which he described in the email as “inappropriate, offensive, and yes, racist.”

In her apology, Reeve said she had “failed both as an ally to my African American colleagues and as a public servant” by not rebuking Whang during the award ceremony.

“I am responsible for ensuring that all Portlanders can have confidence in the city’s legal representation of their collective interests. For that to occur, our past legalized and systemic racism must be actively acknowledged and rejected, and its present impacts must be recognized and combatted,” Reeve wrote. “I failed to do that from the podium on May 14, 2019. I am doing it now.”

Reeve was not available for comment Friday, and a person who answered the phone at the city attorney’s office said Whang no longer works there. A city human resources officer said Whang resigned.

Reeve said in her letter that her office will hire an equity consultant to provide training. She said she will also consult with the city HR and equity offices “to further our goals of using an equity lens in all of our legal work, and building a supportive, inclusive and equitable office culture.”

Whang was a prosecutor in Multnomah County, a state finance regulator and an assistant attorney general before coming to work at City Hall.

In making his remark at the bar association dinner Whang apparently did not take his own advice, given in a 2015 bulletin he wrote for the Oregon State Bar, that lawyers carefully mind their words.

“In the good old days, we could say something stupid, right the error with an apology, and often suffer only the consequences of morning-after embarrassment and lesson learned,” Whang wrote.

Today, when a careless or insensitive statement can live online forever, is much different.

“Continuing in internet eternity are your misinterpreted jokes and slurs, braggadocio and bravado, good intentions backfiring, ‘private’ messages, overzealous ire, political overreach, dumb posts, drunken comments, terrible tweets,” Whang wrote. “They beat on, borne back ceaselessly into the past, to haunt our future selves.”

The Portland Tribune

Council to vote on controversial tenant reforms Wednesday

By Jim Redden

June 16, 2019

Despite changes from the original versions, landlord organization still opposes proposals by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly

The City Council is scheduled to vote on the most recent versions of Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's newest tenant reform proposals on Wednesday, June 19.

Even though they were amended during a June 12 council hearing, both measures are still controversial. They are supported by many renters and housing rights advocates but opposed by many landlords, their organizations and some developers. The city attorney's office also has identified potential legal problems with some of the provisions.

The measures are intended to increase housing availability people who have been historically marginalized by regulation the application process, preventing landlords from refusing to rent to people with criminal convictions in some cases, limiting how much income landlords can require tenants to earn, imposing rules on security deposits, and more.

Tenant advocates say they reforms are necessary to prevent discrimination. Landlord advocates says state and federal laws already prohibit such discrimination, and the new requirements will increase rents and reduce the amount of rental housing.

"Nothing significantly changed for us," Multifamily NW Executive Director Deborah Imse said about the amendments adopted on June 12th. Imse's organization represent both small and large landlords in Portland. She says the cost of administering the proposed requirements and potential liability for not complying with them will prompt many landlords to sell their properties.

The City Attorney's Office has issued an opinion that says some of the provisions are vulnerable to court challenges that could requirement the city to pay the plaintiff's attorney's fees.

The proposals are items 613 and 614 on the council's [June 19 agenda here](#).

Sturdier e-scooters with seats added to Portland fleet

By Zane Sparling
June 16, 2019

Razor and Shared will deploy more than 700 sit-down electric scooters after OK from Transportation Bureau.

A new breed has been added to the fleet of electric scooters zipping across city streets.

Two companies will now field more than 700 e-scooters featuring seats and larger, thicker tires, according to permits approved by the Portland Bureau of Transportation on Friday, June 14.

Razor, a California-based company with operations in eight other cities, will deploy 525 of the sit-down scooters. The Tacoma, Washington firm Shared will add another 200. PBOT says the sedentary scooters were requested during open houses with residents and disability advocates.

"We prioritized accessibility," said Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, "and I am pleased to say that both Razor and Shared delivered."

Lime, Bolt and Spin have already been operating in the Rose City since PBOT authorized a second, year-long test drive on April 26. With the addition of Razor and Shared, there are now 1,975 total e-scooters in service — a slight dip from the 2,043 allowed during the 120-day 2018 trial.

Citing a laudatory article about the last pilot program in the New York Times, PBOT has suggested it has released more data on e-scooters than "any other city in the nation," though the Times didn't specifically report or verify that claim.

The program has not been free of criticism, however.

Some downtown residents say users are ignoring rules requiring helmets, and that laws prohibiting riding on sidewalks or in parks aren't being enforced. Disability Rights Oregon is also concerned that PBOT has shifted the complaint process to the private vendors.

For her part, Commissioner Eudaly says she is focused on making the scooters accessible to all.

"There is still a significant amount of work to be done to achieve equity in transportation, but the addition of seated e-scooters to our local fleet opens up this mode of transport to many more Portlanders," she said.

Willamette Week

SEIU Local 49 Sues Over Park Avenue West's Failure to Hire Union Janitorial Workers

*By Rachel Monahan
June 14, 2019*

Real estate developer Vanessa Sturgeon negotiated a deal with the city to build the Park Avenue West higher in exchange for using union contractors.

The Service Employees International Union Local 49 today amped up its fight with the developer and owner of Park Avenue West, the city's fourth tallest building.

The union has been pushing for years for real estate developer Vanessa Sturgeon of TMT Development to employ janitorial workers who are union members.

The union has filed a lawsuit June 14 in Multnomah County Circuit Court to get that to happen.

Protest outside Park Avenue West. (SEIU) Protest outside Park Avenue West. (SEIU)

In 2014, city officials agreed to let the developer build to 30 stories as part of deal to ensure union contractors, as WW has previously reported.

City zoning limits how high a building can be constructed, by limiting what's called floor-area ratio (FAR)—a technical calculation of the total floor area in the building. In this case, the city gave the developer extra height by giving the developer FAR associated with the nearby park. (The city is considering selling off other FAR in the future.)

But the city has not enforced this agreement and some city officials say the deal was poorly written, allowing loopholes for commercial clients to use non-union janitors so long as the owner and developer were not employing them.

The union is now contesting that loophole in court, suing TMT Development, the city and the commercial tenants of the building.

The suit says the original agreement is "unambiguous" and prohibited the developer, owner and commercial tenants from "contracting with contractors whose employees are not represented in collective bargaining by a labor union."

Vanessa Sturgeon did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The city attorney, Tracy Reeve, declined to comment on pending litigation.

The union also held a protest outside the building today.

"We will keep fighting until Vanessa Sturgeon and the building owners keep all their promises," says Lourdes Rodas, a Portland janitor who is a member of SEIU Local 49, speaking at the rally.

82-Year-Old Portland Woman Dies After Being Hit By Car on Southeast Foster Road

By Elise Herron

June 14, 2019

82-year-old Louanna Battams was crossing the street near Southeast Foster Road and Southeast 71st Avenue when she was struck by a car.

A Portland woman was killed crossing Southeast Foster Road last night. Her death is the 26th traffic-related fatality of the year.

Louanna Battams, 82, was crossing the street at the intersection of Foster and Southeast 71st Avenue last night when she was hit by a car. Officers responded to the scene at around 8:20 pm and medics took Battams to the hospital. This morning, Battams died from her injuries.

The driver of the car stayed at the scene and cooperated with investigators. They were eventually released from the scene.

This is the third fatality on Portland's roads in the last 24 hours. Two people died in a rollover crash on Interstate 405 last night.

As The Oregonian first reported, Battams' death comes one day after Transportation Commissioner Chloe Eudaly celebrated the completion of a road safety project on Southeast Foster Road.

It also underscores dangers on outer Portland streets for pedestrians. It's been two months since a six-year-old girl was hit by a driver who sped through a crosswalk at Southeast 107th and Southeast Division Street. She suffered non-life threatening injuries.

It also follows the release of a Portland Police Bureau podcast in May, in which officers said pedestrians need to make themselves more visible to avoid being hit by cars.

In a statement today, PPB said it "is committed to providing enforcement and raising awareness regarding traffic safety for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians."

"Traffic officers' number one priority is to address behaviors of all road users that might lead to a collision," it continued, "including speed, impairment, distraction and disobeying signals."

Electric Scooters With Seats Hit Portland Streets

By Elise Herron

June 14, 2019

That brings the total number of e-scooter operators in Portland up to five.

Two more companies, Razor and Shared, were permitted to take part in the city's second pilot program today, the Portland Bureau of Transportation announced.

Both companies offer e-scooters with seats for people with disabilities. The seated e-scooters also have larger wheels and wider tires than stand-up scooters.

"We prioritized accessibility in this second Shared Electric Scooter Pilot Program," Transportation Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said in a statement. "There is still a significant

amount of work to be done to achieve equity in transportation, but the addition of seated e-scooters to our local fleet opens up this mode of transport to many more Portlanders."

Starting today, California-based Razor is licensed to deploy 525 e-scooters, and Tacoma, Wash.-based Shared is permitted to distribute 200. The companies join operators Bolt, Lime and Spin, which hit city streets in April, and bring the total number of e-scooters in Portland up to 1,975. Razor currently operates in eight other cities. Portland is the first city Shared will launch in.

In response to critiques of Portland's preliminary trial program last summer, PBOT required companies applying to this pilot to outline plans for making ridership safer and more equitable.

So far, Lime has launched a program that discounts rides in East Portland by 20 percent and PBOT has installed 23 designated e-scooter parking spots.

The Portland Mercury

A Pedestrian Was Killed on SE Foster on the Same Day Portland Unveiled SE Foster's New Safety Improvements

*By Blair Stenvick
June 14, 2019*

One day after the city of Portland celebrated new safety improvements on SE Foster, an 82-year-old pedestrian has died from a traffic collision on that road.

According to a press release from the Portland Police Bureau (PPB), Louanna Battams was crossing SE Foster at an unmarked intersection near SE 71st shortly before 8:40 pm Thursday evening when she was hit by a car. Battams was transported to a nearby hospital, and died from injuries sustained in the collision early Friday morning.

PPB says the driver who hit Battams remained at the scene, cooperated with officers, and was eventually allowed to leave.

Battams' death marks Portland's 26th traffic fatality of 2019. Two other people were killed in a rollover crash on northbound Interstate 405 and U.S. 26 on Thursday evening.

The collision on SE Foster occurred on what was meant to be a celebratory day for the high-traffic street. On Thursday morning, Transportation Commissioner Chloe Eudaly and Transportation Director Chris Warner hosted an event on SE Foster to mark the completion of the Foster Transportation and Streetscape Project.

The project, which extended along SE Foster from SE 50th through SE 90th, was meant to transform the road "from a high-speed, auto-oriented corridor into a more balanced streetscape that is safer and more accessible for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving," according to a city press release. Improvements include road reconstruction, wider sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks with median refuges, accessible curb ramps for people with disabilities, and new center turn lanes and bike lanes.

The project is part of Fixing Our Streets, one of several current efforts from the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to make city streets safer and reduce traffic deaths. Other recent pedestrian deaths have prompted transportation activists to call for quicker and more comprehensive reform.

In its press release, PPB characterized last evening's crash on SE Foster as one of many "preventable collisions" its officers respond to.

"These collisions can deeply impact those involved, their families and loved ones," PPB continues. "Traffic officers' number one priority is to address behaviors of all road users that might lead to a collision, including speed, impairment, distraction and disobeying signals."

Portland's Poised to (Finally) Hold Airbnb Accountable for Shirking City Rules

By Alex Zielinski

June 7, 2019

Portland's finished waiting for short-term rental companies like Airbnb to follow the rules.

Faced with a deficit of affordable housing and a negotiation standstill, Portland City Council is considering an ordinance that will require all Portlanders who rent out their homes through a short-term rental site obtain the mandatory permit to legally do so. Or else.

"We've had years of discussion and litigation with short-term rental companies about increasing compliance [with the city's rules]," said Mayor Ted Wheeler during a Wednesday hearing on the pending ordinance. "But few have shown any interest in aiding the enforcement of city regulations."

In 2014, City Council passed an ordinance that required Portlanders who rent out their homes through Airbnb, HomeAway, VRBO, or other short-term rental platforms obtain a permit through the city's Bureau of Development Services (BDS). To receive a permit, a host needs to prove their rental space meets basic safety standards (confirmed by an official BDS inspection), pay a permit fee (which can cost between \$178 to \$5,000), and notify their neighbors.

Yet, according to the most recent city data, only 30 percent of Portland's short term rental hosts are operating with that permit. That's only up 10 percent from data collected by the city in October 2017.

This blatant non-compliance is largely because companies like Airbnb don't require their hosts to apply for a permit before listing a rental, nor do they share any data on their listings with the city—a step that could help city regulators track down non-complaint hosts. Airbnb has argued that the city's permitting process is too burdensome.

"That means, at any given moment, the city can't vouch for 70 percent of the units marketed online," said Commissioner Nick Fish at the Wednesday hearing. "We can't say for sure to anyone accessing these rentals that they're safe."

Fish compared the city's inability to uphold these standards is akin to the Fire Bureau telling the public it'll no longer be inspecting public venues to make sure they meet fire safety standards.

"I think it has been frustrating for the public to watch us fall short of ensuring public safety," he added.

The city's new ordinance, scheduled for a July 12 vote, aims to change that.

The rule would prohibit all short-term rental companies from advertising rentals without permits. Companies would have the option to dodge this requirement, however, if they gave the city access to data on Portland rentals—like rental location, size, or length of a guests' stay.

Access to this data would let city regulators know if short-term rental hosts are breaking another city rule: One that requires hosts occupy their rental residence for at least nine months out of the year. This rule was created to protect affordable rental homes from being turned into year-round short-term rental pads, further shrinking Portland's diminishing affordable housing supply.

"We know beyond a doubt that short-term rental companies are contributing to a global housing crisis, including a housing crisis right here in Portland," said Commissioner Chloe Eudaly on Wednesday. "And the denial of these platforms—in particular Airbnb—would be laughable if it weren't so offensive."

Threats of litigation from short-term rental companies like Airbnb have given the city pause in introducing this kind of sweeping regulation in the past.

But in March, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a similar policy mandating short-term rental permits in Santa Monica, California. That ruling gave Portland the legal cushion needed to confidently present this ordinance to City Council.

"This ordinance really mirrors the Santa Monica approach that has been tested in that court," said Thomas Lannom, director of Portland's Revenue Bureau, during Wednesday's hearing.

The ordinance, introduced by Wheeler, appears to have commissioners' full support.

It also has the backing of Host2Host, a Portland-based advocacy group for short-term rental hosts, whose members spoke in favor of the permitting process during the Wednesday hearing. But it remains to be seen how short-term rental companies unhappy with the city's regulations—specifically Airbnb—will respond to the June 12 vote.

In an email to the Mercury, Airbnb spokesperson Laura Rillos wrote: "We have long been committed to working with the City of Portland to streamline the onerous registration process and remain in discussions with the City about the best approach to ensure our hosts can share their homes in a responsible way."

Commissioner patience with these "discussions," however, seem to be waning.

"Looking back over my ten years serving on council, nothing has been more frustrating on the regulatory side than getting our short-term rentals to follow rules we've designed to protect consumers and workers," Fish said Wednesday. "The gig economy has thumbed its nose at local regulators for a long time... and I think people need to understand that this has been a war waged by these gig companies alone."