



**Speaker:**

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**Testimony:**

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Mitch LaRosa and I am the Program Director with Mobility Development. I would like to thank our state representatives from the Senate and Assembly for hosting this public hearing. Mobility Development is a non-profit that works with shared-use transportation through a social-equity focus. We act as a liaison for municipalities, community groups, and other public agencies to the private transportation industry. Our work is concentrated on transportation disadvantaged communities in small and mid-sized cities from Southern California to Massachusetts.

Our work over the past decade includes the development and deployment of carsharing, bikesharing, vanpooling, and ridehailing programs. We work to take transportation concepts from research and pilot programs to business planning and full operations. We are based in Buffalo with offices in Chicago and Fresno, California to support our work nationwide. We've been working to expand shared mobility systems in Upstate for the last 11 years and we have an understanding of the state's transportation landscape and how it relates to the broader shared transportation industry. Creating new shared systems in small cities, disadvantaged communities, and uncommon markets is challenging but, it is where we need to focus the most attention when we discuss transportation policy and resources.

I am here today to speak on behalf of our organization with the goal of educating and informing policymakers on e-bikes and scooters based on Mobility Development's experience in shared mobility systems. These technologies are what we term electric micromobility, or EMM for short. EMM technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way we get around our cities by reducing our dependence on automobiles and curtailing greenhouse gas emissions. EMM can act as an important first/last mile connection for public transit and can work in tandem with existing shared transportation programs, giving folks another affordable mobility option.



My hope is to share our organization's experiences with EMM including lessons from research, planning, and operations of shared transportation systems across the country.

The three primary topics I would like to discuss with you today: existing policies EMM policies in place elsewhere, safety for shared EMM system users, and the impacts of shared EMM systems - specifically for small and mid-size cities across the state.

Firstly, New York State sits at a unique crossroads. By waiting to fully legalize EMM technologies, the state has an excellent opportunity to take lessons from the results of policy in communities and states nationwide. Three years ago, the shared scooter and e-bike industries hardly existed but they have grown rapidly since their initial launches.

Since that time, any policies implemented to regulate shared EMM systems have been done on a 'trial and error' basis. When scooters were launched in San Francisco, for instance, there were no policies guiding operations, safety, and fleet sizes. The complete lack of regulation on EMM's led to a backlash from locals over safety, parking, and lack of system upkeep. In response, residents logged nearly 2,000 complaints with city officials in just under a six week span in April and May of 2018 leading to a temporary full ban on all electric scooters. Scooters remained banned in the city for almost six months until city officials were able to allow scooters back on the streets with a more robust permitting and regulation process. During that time, thousands of miles of car trips could have been averted and tons of CO2 saved from the environment if it were not for dysfunction between the EMM operators and the city.

Missteps like this are a reminder of why we need more forward-thinking and common sense policy for EMM systems. Part of this 'common sense' approach is fostering local control over EMM systems. Cities like Chicago, Miami, and Phoenix have designated select areas of their cities to launch EMM pilot programs. These pilot zones are generally 'transportation disadvantaged' where there is a lack of consistent, affordable transportation options including public transit and other shared mobility programs. Lessons learned from controlled pilots like these have allowed lawmakers to better shape policy for their respective communities.

New York State is made up of a diverse set of communities. It's obvious that what works in the City may not be what's best for places Upstate like Binghamton or Watertown. Transportation systems are no exception to this. While e-scooters and e-bikes are certainly part of the new transportation future, we must value local oversight to launch and operate EMM systems. This will give communities an opportunity to maintain autonomy to define how electric micromobility will operate there. The transportation needs of smaller communities and college towns are naturally different than the state's dense urban areas. In addition, there are many lessons that can be derived from two years of electric micromobility system launches across the nation and best-practice policies that could be examined to ensure electric micromobility has the maximum



positive impact in New York State. Municipalities should have the ability to take these lessons into account on a case by case basis.

Another important item to consider regarding EMM policy is the safety of shared systems. Safety issues, specifically in regard to scooters, have been well documented. At least 13 e-scooter fatalities have taken place in the US since the beginning of 2018. In some cases, fatal crashes have even led to cities banning scooters completely as was the case in Nashville and Atlanta. Not only is this a tragic and dire situation for riders, it is also not productive in the push for a more environmentally-friendly transportation landscape.

To put that in perspective, since its launch in 2013, the Citibike program has had over 60 million trips and 1 unfortunate fatality. In contrast, trips on e-scooters have already resulted in four deaths in New York City this year alone. The Center for Disease Control's latest report about e-scooter usage in Austin, Texas revealed a rate of 20 injuries for every 100,000 trips. Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of these critical accidents happened to first time scooter riders and nearly half of all accidents were related to head injuries.

This is a major public safety issue that communities face and there are several attributable reasons for these injuries. Speed and acceleration of EMM devices plays a critical role. The fact that riders are often unclear on where they should be riding the scooters, either on sidewalks, on the street, or in bike lanes, does not help the situation either. Bikes have a demarcated place on our streets, drivers are familiar with their presence there, and there are established rules on how to ride this way. There is also existing infrastructure to park bikes be it on public bike racks, street signs, or other pieces of secure infrastructure. In their current iteration, e-scooters do not lock to anything and can easily become an obstacle for people with disabilities and older adults if they are not parked properly.

Communities and operators must work together to put safety first. For instance, the City of Portland, Oregon has worked with e-scooter operators to fund education and outreach campaigns for users. This is not mandated by the State of Oregon, but rather is an example of a community-based idea to make these systems safer.

Finally, I would like to discuss how shared EMM systems could have a positive impact on New York State as a whole. With proper planning and coordination, electric micromobility can act as an efficient, affordable, and environmentally friendly transportation options, especially in disadvantaged communities. A 2018 study by the mobility platform Populus found that in Washington, DC, electric micromobility is giving disadvantaged communities a new mobility option by operating in areas not already served by shared mobility systems or in public transit deserts.



All shared mobility systems also offer users the chance to use innovative transportation technologies without having to personally own them. Purchasing e-bikes and e-scooters can be cost prohibitive, especially for low-income communities. Offering these technologies for a modest use cost is one way to make transportation systems more equitable.

While much of the discourse regarding EMM legislation has centered on New York City, it is important that we also consider the importance of including and empowering communities Upstate to take part in this transportation revolution.

As shared transportation models continue to evolve for small and mid-size cities, we believe that state policymakers should support continual learning opportunities that will foster guidance for all communities statewide. We recognize that not all municipalities have the proper resources to craft local policy and enforce regulations of shared EMM systems but that should not be a prerequisite to not all e-bikes and scooters or allow operators to solely dictate the terms on which they will serve people there. Community-control of shared transportation systems is key to their success in non-traditional markets and whatever the state can do to create an environment for ample local input would go a long way into the creation of sustainable and accessible shared EMM systems.

It is important that we focus on creating the conditions that encourage collaboration between shared mobility operators and the communities they serve to maximize the benefits of electric micromobility technologies for everyone. From our work with small and mid-size cities here in New York State and elsewhere, these communities need additional expertise, guidance, and resources to properly handle the rollout of shared EMM systems.

In the cases of Nashville and Atlanta, it was not until after issues with scooters arose that the Tennessee and Georgia state governments took action with statewide EMM legislation. New York State must be proactive in its approach with local governments so that this type of dysfunction and, potential tragedies, do not occur.

In conclusion, the adoption of electric-scooters and bikes are an important piece to advancing sustainable transportation in New York State. However, we must consider how to properly implement electric micromobility systems so that these technologies are safe, inclusive, and will advance mobility for all New Yorkers.

I am more than happy to answer any questions this panel has. Electric micromobility is an important topic that I am proud to help our community partners plan for and embrace. Thank you again for your time and consideration.