

Micromobility Policy Suggestions for Petersburg, VA

If the results of an infrastructural analysis indicate that Petersburg is ready for micromobility, the next step would be for the city to draft a permit or pilot operating agreement that outlines the rules for micromobility vendors. Based on the best practices outlined in the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) 2019 Shared Micromobility Guidelines, this permit should outline several policies:

1. Data Sharing Requirements
2. Equitable Distribution Policy
3. Equitable Access Policy
4. Geofenced Areas
5. Enforcement Clause

Data Sharing Requirements

It is imperative that the micromobility vendor shares real-time data with Petersburg so that the city can enforce all of its policies. Data-sharing policies are already being regularly implemented in many localities, as a review of 239 American shared micromobility programs found that 83% included data-sharing requirements (Brown, et al., 2022). Additionally, Bordenkircher and O'Neil (n.d.) state that data sharing is “possibly one of the most beneficial externalities” to come from dockless micromobility devices as it allows cities unprecedented insight into non-vehicular trips. As such, this data should be used to understand how micromobility devices are being used, and by whom. This data can inform the city if its equity policies are working based on the demographics of

users and where trips originate and end. The data collected about micromobility trips should also be organized in an annual summary evaluation report, such as the one completed by the [City of Chicago in 2021](#), which includes data about trips, vendor compliance, and distribution. This report will be incredibly important in understanding if micromobility in Petersburg is reaching the necessary audience and truly addressing the first-mile last-mile problem.

Equitable Distribution Policy

An equitable distribution policy requires the vendor to redistribute micromobility devices at some frequency so that a proportion of the devices are deployed in equity zones. The frequency at which a vendor is required to redistribute devices varies across jurisdictions: in St. Paul, this redistribution occurs once daily, whereas Chicago requires rebalancing twice per day (City of Chicago, 2020; Guo et al., 2019). Once daily would likely be sufficient for Petersburg because of its smaller population, but the success of the equitable distribution policy should be regularly evaluated and tweaked as needed to achieve the desired results.

The proportion of devices required to be deployed in each equity zone is also not universally decided across the country. In Arlington, 13% of devices are required to be deployed in equity zones because roughly 13% of its population lives in equity zones (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2021). If Petersburg were to use this metric, about 29.6% of devices (or 30% for ease) should be deployed in equity zones. In Chicago, however, the equity zone deployment minimum is based on the area of the

equity zones: 45% of Chicago's pilot area was an equity zone, and 50% of their fleet was required to be deployed in an equity zone. If Petersburg were to use this metric, 18.6% of the micromobility fleet should be deployed in equity zones.

Equitable Access Policy

A 2021 study found that 36% of respondents do not use micromobility because of the price (Lang et al., 2022). Furthermore, in 2022 Lang et al. also noted that as income rises, so does micromobility use, showing that the cost of use, among other factors, is a large barrier to access. As such, the permit for micromobility vendors to operate in Petersburg should outline policies to ensure that users who might not be able to use micromobility otherwise have access. In the ordinance included in the October 17th Regular City Council meeting, discounts for veterans, senior citizens, healthcare workers, and students with Pell Grants were mentioned, however, expanding this discount program to include other low-income residents may be beneficial. In the 2019 NACTO Shared Micromobility Guidelines, it is recommended to use enrollment in social support programs like SNAP or public housing as verification for low income. Additionally, the Bird presentation also mentioned the possibility of discounts for rides beginning or ending in equity zones, which may be another good option to lower costs for residents likely to be transit-dependent.

Lastly, it is important to note that the shared micromobility unaltered business model requires access to a smartphone, the internet, and a bank account. To increase access to populations who don't have these tools readily available, the micromobility

provider should allow for cash payment options. In the presentation given by Bird, it was mentioned that payment can be given using prepaid debit cards or cash-to-load payments and that rides can be started via text rather than through an app.

Geofenced Areas

Geofenced areas describe places where micromobility devices are unable to ride or must ride at a reduced speed. The definition of zones in the latter category will depend most on infrastructure quality and road speed, but the safety of pedestrians should also be considered if sidewalk riding is allowed. School zones and pedestrianized areas may be good candidates for reduced-speed or no-speed zones, where devices must be walked.

Enforcement Clause

Enforcement may be one of the most important parts of a micromobility permit because, without it, micromobility vendors may not comply with any of the other requirements. In Portland, where fifteen percent of micromobility devices are required to be deployed in East Portland, many micromobility providers either were not always able to meet this requirement or did not even try (Johnston et al., 2020). Additionally, in a study of 239 shared micromobility programs across the United States, only 15% were found to enforce any equity requirements (Brown, et al., 2022). That is to say, enforcement is an often-forgotten, but important aspect of equitable distribution policies.

Enforcement should outline how often vendors will be checked for compliance and the penalties for non-compliance. Some examples of penalties currently in place include temporary permit suspensions of 2-3 days, decreasing the allowed fleet size, or fines (NACTO, 2019). According to the NACTO Shared Micromobility Guidelines, if the micromobility provider is found to be non-compliant, the city should suspend the operating permit.

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