

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	January 3, 2023
Action Required:	Approval of Resolution
Presenter:	Ben Chambers
Staff Contacts:	Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager
Title:	Extending the Dockless Mobility Sharing System Permit for Veo Ride, Inc. (1 reading)

Background

Under the City's dockless mobility program, Veo Ride, Inc. has been operating its dockless scooter service in Charlottesville since 2020. The operation has approximately 350 scooters and 50 e-bikes operating in Charlottesville and served over a quarter million rides in 2022. Veo Ride, Inc. is interested in renewing its permit for 2023, but has requested an opportunity to revisit the current terms of the permit regulations to better serve the City. This review of the permit would include developing a more responsive plan for addressing scooter parking concerns. In order to complete this review of permit regulations and Veo Ride, Inc.'s re-application to the dockless sharing system permit program, Veo Ride, Inc. is requesting a 90-day extension of its 2022 permit, through March 31, 2023.

Discussion

Following a 2018 pilot program for shared e-bikes and scooters, the City established the Dockless Mobility Permit Program in December 2019 to ensure that for-hire dockless vehicles were operated in a manner that was consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the public. The program was designed to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use, improve mobility, safety, and equity of the transportation network, and to create a healthy and safe city.

Veo Rides, Inc. has held a dockless mobility permit and has operated scooter and e-bike services in Charlottesville since 2020. Scooter and e-bike permits have been held by additional companies in the past, but currently Veo Rides, Inc. is the sole operator in the City. Veo Rides, Inc. has up to 350 scooters and 50 e-bikes operating in Charlottesville, which have served over a quarter million rides in 2022. The number of vehicles that Veo Rides, Inc. is allowed to have operating is capped by the permit regulations, though vehicle bonuses are available based on performance standards set in the regulations.

Veo Rides, Inc. approached the City about the renewal of their permit for 2023 and has requested to revisit the Dockless Mobility Permit Program regulations. Specifically, Veo Rides, Inc. is seeking a restructuring of fees, fleet size restrictions, and performance-based vehicle bonuses to be better aligned with permitting programs in peer cities they operate in across the country. An extension of

their 2022 permit would allow for this re-assessment of the current permit regulations.

The City itself could benefit from this re-assessment, due to ongoing issues with dockless scooter and e-bike parking. Despite Veo Rides, Inc. actively managing their fleet through redistribution and mitigation tools like required photos of final parking locations provided by users, dockless scooters and e-bikes are often found parked in areas where they are blocking sidewalks, bike lanes, and curb ramps, creating potential mobility issues for pedestrians and bicyclists. The additional 90 days would allow City staff and Veo Rides, Inc. to identify and implement strategies to address these issues. This would include identifying locations for parking corrals in heavily-used corridors like West Main Street. Parking corrals for dockless scooters and e-bikes are used by the University of Virginia to control parking on Grounds and an extension of that system would be simple for Veo Rides, Inc. to implement in 2023.

The Dockless Mobility Permit Program has been managed historically by the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, in collaboration with the University of Virginia's Parking and Transportation department. The City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator position has been vacant in 2022. The 90-day extension would allow the City to fill this position and return to more active management of the permitting program ahead of Veo Rides, Inc.'s 2023 permit application.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

This program supports the City Council's vision statements on Economic Sustainability, Green City, America's Healthiest City, and Connected Community. It can contribute to Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan to be a beautiful and sustainable natural and built environment, and Objective 3.3, to provide a variety of transportation and mobility options. The program also aligns with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan recommendation to monitor existing bikeshare programs.

Community Engagement

Since the 2018 pilot program, staff has met with representatives from a variety of City departments, City schools, as well as with representatives from UVA Parking and Transportation and Office of the Architect to coordinate an approach that would effectively manage this new technology. In addition, staff has sought input from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee throughout the pilot program.

City staff created a website with program and safety information, an email address to collect feedback on the program, and worked to integrate scooters in the myCville reporting tool. Staff has also worked with the companies to coordinate opportunities to table at a variety of popular events.

Budgetary Impact

There is no impact to the General Fund.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of a 90-day extension of Veo Ride, Inc.'s 2022 Dockless Mobility Sharing System Permit, through March 31, 2023.

Alternatives

If an extension is not approved, Veo Ride, Inc. will need to apply for a 2023 Dockless Mobility Sharing System Permit. Veo Ride, Inc. has not indicated its willingness to reapply without changes to the permit regulations. Veo Ride, Inc. would need to remove its vehicles from Charlottesville immediately.

Attachments

1. Resolution for extension of Veo contract 12.19.22