

DATE ISSUED: February 21, 2003

REPORT NO. 03-033

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
Agenda of February 26, 2003

SUBJECT: Alternative Modes of Transportation

REFERENCE: Manager's Report No. 02-226 dated October 3, 2002

SUMMARY

This is an informational item only. No action is required on the part of the Committee.

BACKGROUND

At its May 29, 2002 meeting, the Land Use & Housing Committee discussed the issue of alternative modes of transportation, including the electric personal assistive mobility device (EPAMD) currently being manufactured as the Segway Human Transporter. Staff was directed to determine how these alternative modes of transportation could be accommodated in the City's current transportation system.

Concurrent with the Committee's discussion and request, the State Legislature was discussing SB1918 (Torlakson) which defined EPAMDs such as the Segway as pedestrians in the California Vehicle Code. SB1918 also allows local jurisdictions to determine where and when EPAMDs can operate. This bill was passed by the Legislature and was signed by the Governor on September 26, 2002 with an effective date of March 1, 2003.

It should be noted that motorized wheelchairs or other devices used by persons with disabilities are not subject to any of these provisions.

Staff reported back to the Committee on October 9, 2002, with a set of initial recommendations to restrict the use of electric personal assistive mobility devices (EPAMDs) in business districts to sidewalks with a clearance of ten feet or wider, and prohibiting the use of EPAMDs on Class I bicycle facilities.

After hearing public comment, the Committee directed staff to conduct additional research into these modes of personal transportation and report back with a set of final recommendations.

DISCUSSION

A major point of discussion in the legislative deliberations on SB1918, among the Committee members at the October 9, 2002 meeting, and at the City staff level was the need to balance the convenience, personal mobility, and environmental benefits of the EPAMD with the safety of pedestrians and of the operators of the devices themselves. Of particular concern was the use of a heavy, relatively fast-moving EPAMD on a crowded or narrow sidewalk, especially when seniors, small children, or persons with disabilities are present.

Subsequent to the October 2002 meeting, staff met with representatives of Segway – currently the only manufacturer of EPAMDs – to discuss these concerns. Investigation and actual experience with the Segway Human Transporter revealed that these concerns had already been addressed either in the design of the Segway HT or in the marketing of the device. Specifically, these safety measures include:

- Electronic “smart keys” which not only provide anti-theft protection, but which also set a maximum operating speed for the device. Depending on which “smart key” is used, the Segway HT can be programmed not exceed a speed of 6mph, 8mph, or 12 mph.
- The Segway HT has very little braking distance, and comes to an almost immediate stop. Furthermore, stopping and slowing occur when the user pulls back, away from an oncoming person or object – an instinctive move.
- The manufacturer recommends that the Segway HT be used only by persons over the age of 16, a strong indication that the device is not a toy.
- Segway HTs can only be purchased directly from the manufacturer over the internet, and delivery is made to a regional center where the purchaser must complete a safety and user-training course before taking the device home.

Staff has identified several potential methods for regulating the use of EPAMDs on City sidewalks. These include:

1. That all users be age 18 or older;

2. That the speed not exceed 8mph on sidewalks in business districts;
3. That all users carry proof of completion of a user-training course;
4. That EPAMDs be prohibited sidewalks in business districts; and/or
5. That EPAMDs be prohibited entirely from City sidewalks.

The Citizens' Review Committee on ADA and Disability Issues (the CRC) has scheduled this issue for discussion at its meeting of February 28.

CONCLUSION

Staff is recommending that the Committee rehear this issue at later date with additional input from staff and the CRC.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by:

D. Cruz Gonzalez, Director
Transportation Department

George I. Loveland
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