



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 557

DATE: February 20, 2020

SPONSOR: Delegate Attar, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Department of Transportation)

Motor and Electric Scooter Sharing Companies – Nonvisual Access

House Bill 557 would require motor scooter share companies operating in Maryland to include on each device an embossed tactile phone number accessible to a visually impaired individual. Further, the bill directs those companies to provide nonvisual access to its mobile application and company website that provides full and equal accessibility to disabled individuals. Montgomery County Department of Transportation supports this bill.

Motor and electric low-speed scooters have increased in popularity as economical and environmentally sustainable modes of transportation. Recognizing this trend, in 2019, the General Assembly adopted legislation that established a definition for “electric low-speed scooter” and specified that these vehicles be considered as bicycles under Maryland Vehicle Law. In doing so, local jurisdictions have been able to regulate the use of the devices and enhance public safety for not only riders, but bicyclists, motorists, and, in most cases, pedestrians, but, unfortunately, not for everyone. With the proliferation of scooter sharing programs, carelessly abandoned dockless devices have become a public safety nightmare for visually impaired pedestrians.

In its current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with dockless vehicle sharing companies operating in Montgomery County, the County requires each device to have a braille/embossed lettering sticker on each vehicle. The information must include an email address, URL, and phone number for reporting problems without requiring an app or smartphone. This provision was added to the County’s MOUs, in part, after talking with representatives from the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland during last year’s consideration and passage of electric low-speed scooter legislation. Having a Statewide bill to require tactile information on each device about the company will improve compliance and enhance the overall public safety aspects of dockless vehicle programs.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report on HB 557.