Hey, Atlanta: Clear the Clutter!

Electric scooters are a fun, convenient way to get around, and they have great potential for reducing the number of car trips in Atlanta. But for people who walk, they’re often a safety hazard and a nuisance.

The ordinance that Atlanta approved in January 2019 banned users from riding on or blocking sidewalks. Despite that, little has changed.

**Clear the [e-scooter] Clutter**

In April 2019, PEDS launched *Clear the Clutter*, a crowdsourcing campaign that made it easy for people to report scooters that block sidewalks or endanger people who are walking.

During a 30-day period, people used the app to upload over 1,500 images of scooter violations. This is more than five times as many as scooter companies and ATL311 received in three months.

**Photos confirm that scooter use is out of control.**

People who posted comments made their feelings clear.

- *On [windy] days, it’s goodbye to parked scooters standing up ... and hello tripping over these devices.*
- *I get sick of walking around scooters laying in the crosswalks and sidewalks. A lot of the seniors are in wheelchairs.*
- *It’s a rare day when I don’t have a scooter whiz by me on the sidewalk within an inch or two of my body.*
Asking people to Scoot Smart is not enough.

PEDS applauds the City of Atlanta for launching its Scoot Smart campaign. We also commend the City for providing flyers to police officers that clarify which behaviors are illegal.

Yet without rigorous enforcement and consistent penalties, the campaign is unlikely to put an end to haphazard parking or riding scooters on sidewalks.

People with even a bit of common courtesy already know they shouldn’t leave scooters in the middle of a sidewalk. For change to happen, riders need to feel it in their pocketbook.

It’s unrealistic, however, to expect the Atlanta Police Department to devote sufficient resources to provide effective enforcement. We urge Atlanta to require scooter companies to play a larger role in penalizing violators.

Other cities are doing more. Atlanta must as well.

San Francisco
- Requires companies to furnish built-in locks, which deter theft and vandalism and help ensure that parked scooters don’t tip over or block sidewalks.
- Prohibits parking on sidewalks that are less than 9 feet wide.
- Charges companies a $25 fee for violations.

Indianapolis
- Police stepped up enforcement measures to keep scooter riders off sidewalks. The first citation issued requires rider to pay $20.
- City can issue a $25 fine to companies if a scooter is left in a prohibited area.
- Charges companies $1 per day per scooter to pay for infrastructure and enforcement.

Santa Monica
- Installed 100 sidewalk and in-street corrals as drop zones for e-scooters and e-bikes.

Nashville
- Companies use mobile apps or other means to fine riders for illegally parking or operating scooters, with fines ranging from $10 - $25.
PEDS urges the City of Atlanta to take action!

1. Tighten parking restrictions and clarify user rules.
   Atlanta requires scooters parked on sidewalks to “afford the least obstruction of pedestrian traffic and provide a minimum of 5 feet clear for pedestrians.” This makes parking on narrow sidewalks illegal. It also bars parking in ways that create tripping hazards or obstacle courses.
   Yet such violations are common. To change that, Atlanta must also:
   - Prohibit parking in the pedestrian through zone on streets that have 3 feet or wider furniture zones.
   - Prohibit parking on trails or on sidewalks less than 8 feet wide.

2. Set clear and reasonable fines and establish a minimum age limit.
   Penalties for riding scooters on sidewalks in Atlanta include up to a $1,000 fine and up to 6 months in jail. This is unreasonable and will discourage enforcement. Atlanta should instead:
   - Set specific fines, such as $25 for riding on sidewalks or for parking in ways that block sidewalks, trails, or curb ramps.
   - Prohibit children under 16 from riding scooters.

3. Require scooter companies to penalize violators.
   - Require companies to issue fines to riders for parking violations.
   - Monitor locations where “chargers” set up scooters between 6 - 8 a.m. and impound vehicles that are parked incorrectly.

4. Provide infrastructure that helps prevent parking and riding violations.
   - Provide parking corrals, scooter racks, or other facilities.
   - Require companies to furnish scooters with “latch-to” or “lock-to” devices to prevent tripping hazards.
   - Make riding in the road safer by converting travel or parking lanes to LIT lanes that can be shared by scooters, bicycles, and other micro-mobility devices.

5. Set deadline for companies to develop and implement geo-fencing and other technological solutions.

6. Provide an app that makes it easy for people to report violations to all companies and that also enables City officials to monitor implementation of timely corrections.
The time to Clear the Clutter is now!
Photos people submitted show common problems and demand solutions.

Near misses with people riding scooters on sidewalks have become a dangerous and stressful fact of life for people who walk in Atlanta.

Parked scooters often block sidewalks, bus stops, trails, curb ramps, and more.

Narrow sidewalks cannot accommodate parking. Yet many riders and “chargers” overlook the needs of others and do so anyway.

Toppled scooters create tripping hazards and eyesores. They also block sidewalks and deny access to people with disabilities.