

Submitter:

Mark Bentz

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Transportation

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4007

I am all for making our streets safer by facilitating micromobility Personal Electric Vehicles (PEVs) and finally recognizing them in Oregon Vehicle Code. Portland produces many e-skateboards that have astounding capabilities. There are so many PEVs emerging on the market that need recognition and safe use rules.

I have ridden over 20,000 miles on four electric unicycles (EUC) since 2021. These vehicles have characteristics similar to a moped without the noise or pollution, can turn on a dime, climb a curb or hill without effort, and fit under a work desk. EUCs have enough range for a suburban to city center commute. It's simple to set the software to emit a speed warning beep or limit speed, and very easy to ride at pedestrian or bicycle speeds and share the trails with my neighbors. The top speed of an EUC has little to do with its overall safety. An 70 pound EUC is more maneuverable than a baby stroller but can safely carry a rider down a connecting road in traffic.

Many of my coworkers, family members, and friends have turned away from expensive, wasteful automobile transit solutions and embraced PEVs. I have spoken with numerous PEV adopters that were unable to run errands, attend appointments, or commute without an automobile until they discovered the joy of PEV riding.

I frequently ride with the Portland e-Riders and we promote safe riding for all ages on public streets. We require that riders wear a helmet and have 100 miles of experience on their PEV before joining our group rides. The Portland e-Riders use moderators, traffic corkers, and speed control. The depth of personal experience these riders possess about their PEVs is very significant.

I have a friend that rides 40 miles a day on his e-scooter from Camas, WA down to ride with friends in Portland. He has two e-scooters. We have discussed how impossible it is to get insurance and legal representation because our PEVs are not defined as valid means of transit. In the event of a crash with an automobile, PEVs that are not recognized as a valid means of transportation in Oregon roads and appropriate cycling infrastructure are at a real disadvantage against an automobile driver. Being acknowledged as legal riders in Oregon would be a huge improvement in our rights to ride and commute on PEVs.

I coach Milwaukie High School Swim. Presently, because of inconsistent batteries and vehicle quality, the North Clackamas School District has banned PEVs from being operated, stored, and charged in district buildings. Many students use

inexpensive e-scooters to ride to school. They have no choice but to lock up their scooters at friends houses, fences, sign posts, and other places. We need a safety program for young riders, safe vehicles for them to ride, and places to store PEVs.

I was horrified to read about each of the preventable deaths last year caused by unsafe e-scooter riding. Cars are massive, steel, killing machines that are growing bigger and heavier. We need to implement safety programs so that both PEV riders and automobile drivers understand their relationship, and have a place on the road. It is terribly inequitable that the economically challenged peoples in our state must resort to unsafe transit, while the affluent enjoy protection from harm. Our society has expanded in such a way that even if PEV travel is possible, most of the people I know feel unsafe riding there.

I live in Gladstone, Oregon and there are many riders here that do not follow the rules of the road. A frequent hazard is youth that ride above 15 mph along the sidewalks and then they blitz through the crosswalk. Motorists do not anticipate such behavior and I have witnessed several near misses.

Please help our community improve its PEV safety program by passing HB 4007.