

Paris votes to ban rental e-scooters (Update)

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Paris has progressively tightened regulations for electric scooters since their chaotic introduction in 2018.

Paris voted overwhelmingly Sunday to banish for-hire electric scooters from the streets of the French capital, delivering a blow to operators and a victory for road safety campaigners.

The referendum means the City of Light, once a pioneer in embracing e-scooter services, is set to become the only major European capital to outlaw the widespread devices booked on apps such as Lime.

The city's residents were asked to weigh in for or against them in a public consultation organized by mayor Anne Hidalgo, with nearly 90 percent of the votes cast against, official results showed.

"We're happy. It's what we've been fighting for over four years," said Arnaud Kielbasa, co-founder of the Apacauvi charity, which represents victims of e-scooter accidents.

"All Parisians say they are nervous on the pavements, nervous when they cross the roads. You need to look everywhere," Kielbasa, whose wife and infant daughter were hit by an e-scooter driver, told AFP. "That's why they've voted against them."

'Not sustainable'

Operators say they are being unfairly singled out as responsible for the often chaotic nature of Paris streets, where mayor Hidalgo has championed bikes and other forms of non-emitting transport since coming to power in 2014.

Her administration welcomed e-scooter operators with open arms in 2018, but it has progressively tightened regulations since, creating designated parking zones, limiting the top speed and restricting the number of operators.



Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo has pushed cycling and bike-sharing but favours a ban on e-scooters.

But such measures have failed to convince residents, who often complain about reckless and drunken driving, as well as clutter on pavements.

A spate of fatal accidents has also highlighted the dangers of vehicles that can currently be hired by children as young as 12.

"I'm committed to respecting the choice of voters, purely and simply," Hidalgo told reporters as she voted on Sunday.

The 63-year-old is now expected not to renew operating contracts for the city's three operators—California-based Lime, Amsterdam-based Dott

and Berlin-based Tier—from August 31.

She said on Sunday that their business model was "very expensive—five euros for 10 minutes—it's not very sustainable, and above all, it's the cause of a lot of accidents."

The consultation will not affect privately owned electric scooters, of which 700,000 were sold nationwide last year, according to transport ministry figures.

Around 100,000 journeys are completed each day in France on rented e-scooters in around 200 towns and cities.



Voters were offered a simple choice of "for" or "against"

'Against the current'?

The ban represents a significant financial and reputational blow for the multinational operators and could encourage other cities to follow suit.

Montreal outlawed all electric scooters for rental or private use in 2020, while Copenhagen banned rental versions in 2020 before bringing them back a year later with stricter conditions.

E-scooter companies have backed tighter regulations in France, unveiled by the government last week, which would increase the minimum age to 14 and increase fines for offenses such as driving with a passenger.

"Of course, there are driving offenses and dangerous behavior. That's human nature, not the vehicle," Nicolas Gorse, managing director of Dott, told LCI television on Sunday. "What we need is to educate, detect and punish."

Hadi Karam, general manager for France at Lime, told AFP last week that Paris was going "against the current" in seeking to ban rental e-scooters, citing recent decisions to expand them in Washington, New York, Madrid or London.

"There's a trend towards these vehicles and this trend started in Paris which was a pioneer," he said.

Operators offered free rides to customers who voted on Sunday and employed online influencers to try to drum up support among their mostly young users—largely in vain judged by the high proportion of older voters seen in queues.

"They're dangerous, both for those who use them and for pedestrians," Francoise Granier, a 68-year-old doctor who voted in the ninth district of the capital, told AFP. "And the police never intervene."

Like her, IT worker Michael Dahan, 50, deplored the state of the capital's streets, saying: "If it was better regulated, I wouldn't be against... but you see people behaving in a crazy way."

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