

# Rented electric scooters vanish from Paris streets

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Paris feels the floating scooters are too much of a nuisance.

Parisians woke up on Friday to a world without free-floating rented electric scooters, loathed as a pedestrian-bothering nuisance by some but mourned by others.

The French capital is the first in Europe to completely ban the hire scooters from its streets, after voters overwhelmingly elected to remove them in an April referendum—albeit on a tiny turnout of 7.5 percent.

Friday puts an end to five years of seeing users zip through crowds of pedestrians or park awkwardly on pavements and at intersections, as well as a string of accidents.

Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo had herself campaigned against scooters, saying removing them would reduce "nuisance".

"It makes me sad, because I liked so much to be able to get around like that, go wherever without the stress of using a car, getting stuck in traffic jams," scooter user Valerie Rinckel said a few days before the ban came into force.

## **'Quite unbearable'**

But another customer, Anass Eloula, said that "it's safer to stop now and get back to bikes, or for people to take the bus or public transport".

David Belliard, deputy Paris mayor in charge of urban mobility, told reporters on Thursday that the case against the rental scooters was overwhelming despite efforts by operators to address problems.

"There was some progress, but the bottom line is still negative," he said. "The anarchy was quite unbearable."

Operators Lime, Tier and Dott have been gradually removing their 15,000 machines from public streets, planning to send them off to other cities in Europe and beyond after repair and maintenance work.

Some will even remain in the wider Ile-de-France region around Paris,

with Tier offering service in suburbs like Marne-la-Vallee and Saint-Germain-en-Laye.



'Anarchy' on the pavement.

"We've turned the page on scooters" for the whole Paris region, said Xavier Mirailles, Lime's public affairs director.

The Californian firm will send its scooters to Lille in northern France, London, Copenhagen and several German cities, while Dott's will go to Belgium and Tel Aviv.

## Alternatives

Instead of scooters, the firms hope customers will switch to floating hire bicycles, which all of them already have on offer.

"Rather than giving in to nostalgia, we prefer to look to the future," said Tier's France chief Clement Pette, pointing to 5,000 bikes in his Paris stable.

Lime's Mirailles said that "bicycle development is showing strong growth", with a "very exciting outlook" for their 10,000 machines.

But bikes "are different, those bikes are big and heavy... not as agile", said Amanda Rollins, a Paris-based American influencer with 740,000 TikTok subscribers who has posted about her love of scooters.

Some regular users have already bought their own scooter or opted for daily, half-day or weekly rentals offered by firms like electric mobility retailer Volt.

"This isn't free-floating," Volt founder Gregory Coillot told AFP, saying he wants to tempt over heavy users of the now-banned scooters as well as tourists and visitors at next year's Olympic Games.

"The end of free-floating will increase demand for hire massively," he added, saying he planned to expand his fleet up to 2,000 scooters to serve areas where the former operators did most business.

Nationwide, France's government on Friday hiked the minimum age for riding electric scooters from 12 to 14 and introduced heavier fines for traffic violations, after an increase in accidents involving the vehicles.

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