

PARIS TO BAN ELECTRIC SCOOTER RENTALS



Based on a recent referendum, Paris, once a pioneer in the adoption of electric scooter services, is set to become the only European capital to ban the ubiquitous devices booked on apps like Lime.

Official results showed that the city's residents were asked to vote for or against the ban on electric scooters in a public consultation organized by Mayor Anne Hidalgo, with **nearly 90% of votes cast for the ban.**

"We are happy. This is what we have been fighting for more than four years," said Arno Kielbasa, co-founder of the charity Apacauvi, which represents victims of electric scooter accidents.

"All Parisians say they are worried on the sidewalks and nervous when crossing the roads. You have to look everywhere," told Kilbasa, whose wife and young daughter were hit by an electric scooter. "That's why they voted against it."

Unsustainable

Operators say they have been unfairly blamed for the often chaotic nature of Paris' streets, with Mayor Hidalgo championing bikes and other zero-emission modes of transportation since she took office in 2014.

Her administration welcomed electric scooter operators with open arms in 2018, but has gradually tightened regulations since then, creating designated parking zones, limiting maximum speed, and restricting the number of operators.

But such measures do not impress residents, who often complain of reckless driving and drunkenness, as well as chaos on the sidewalks.

A series of fatal accidents has also highlighted the dangers of vehicles that can currently be rented by children under the age of 12.

"I am committed to respecting the choice of the voters, pure and simple," Hidalgo told reporters as she voted.

The 63-year-old is now expected not to renew the operating contracts of the city's three operators starting Aug. 31. She said their business model is "expensive - five euros for 10 minutes - it's not very sustainable and, above all, it causes too many accidents."

The consultations will not affect private electric scooters, of which 700,000 were sold nationwide last year, according to Ministry of Transport figures. About 100,000 trips are made every day in France on e-scooters rented in about 200 cities.

'Against the Current'?

The ban is a blow to the finances and reputation of multinational companies and could encourage other cities to follow suit. Montreal decided to ban electric scooters for rental or private use in 2020, while Copenhagen banned rental versions in 2020 before reinstating them a year later with stricter conditions.

Electric scooter companies have backed stricter regulations in France, unveiled by the government last week, that would raise the minimum age to 14 and increase fines for infractions such as riding with a passenger.

Hedi Karam, chief executive of French company Lime, said that **Paris was "going against the current" in seeking to ban electric scooter rentals, citing recent decisions to expand them to Washington, New York, Madrid or London.** "There is a trend toward these vehicles, and that trend started in Paris, which was a pioneer," he said.

Operators offered free rides to the customers and hired online influencers to try to drum up support from most young users - largely to no avail given the high proportion of older voters on the waiting lists.

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