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**Subject:** Memo - Use of Low-Powered and Non-Motorized Small Vehicles on Streets, Sidewalks, and Pathways

**Attachments:** Memo to Mayor & Council - Use of Low-Powered and Non-Motorized Small Veh....pdf

Greetings Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Jerry Dobrovolny regarding Use of Low-Powered and Non-Motorized Small Vehicles on Streets, Sidewalks, and Pathways. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- On November 15, 2017, Council approved permanently allowing non-motorized skates, skateboards and scooters in separated bike lanes.
- At that time Council also raised questions regarding the regulations and by-laws on the use of low powered and non-motorized wheelchairs and mobility scooters on the separated bike lanes.
- This memo provides a detailed summary on the various forms of low powered and non-motorized small vehicles and where they are permitted in the City.

Should you have any questions, please contact Winston Chou, Manager of Traffic and Data Management at 604.873.7913 or [winston.chou@vancouver.ca](mailto:winston.chou@vancouver.ca).

Best,  
Sadhu

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## MEMORANDUM

December 07, 2017

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager  
Janice MacKenzie, City Clerk  
Lynda Graves, Manager, Administration Services, City Manager's Office  
Rena Kendall-Craden, Director, Communications  
Kevin Quinlan, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Naveen Girm, Director of Community Relations, Mayor's Office  
Lon LaClaire, Director of Transportation, Engineering Services

FROM: Jerry Dobrovolsky, General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Use of Low-Powered and Non-Motorized Small Vehicles on Streets, Sidewalks, and Pathways

This memo is to provide Mayor and Council with a summary to clarify locations where 'low-powered vehicles' can operate (including motorized wheelchairs, hover boards, unicycles, scooters, skateboards and Segways) and where other non-motorized wheelchairs, skates, and scooters are permitted.

The Province regulates the use of all motor vehicles (including low-powered) on the roadway and the sidewalk adjacent to the roadway through the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA), and the City regulates the use of park paths and the seawall through the Street & Traffic By-law and Parks Control By-law.

At this time, both Provincial and City regulations prohibit the use of low-powered vehicles such as motorized hover boards, unicycles, scooters, skateboards and Segways on all public rights of way. The only exceptions are motorized wheelchairs and electric-assisted bicycles.

Staff have consulted the Provincial Commercial Vehicle Safety and Inspection (CVSE) Branch regarding the reasons for restricting the use of low-powered vehicles. The CVSE is the Provincial authority responsible for inspecting vehicles, both privately owned and commercial, to determine if they meet federal safety and performance requirements to be used on the roadway. It is up to each vehicle manufacturer to design, build, test, and certify the vehicles they manufacture to meet the federal requirements. In the case of low-powered vehicles such as Segways, motorized skateboards, hover boards and unicycles, the devices are not designed by the manufacturer to meet federal safety and performance requirements. As a result, they would not pass CVSE safety inspection and cannot be used on the road.

Furthermore, the City prohibits the use of motorized hover boards, unicycles, scooters, skateboards and Segways on the seawall and park paths to reserve this space for active modes such as walking and cycling and not be in conflict with motorized vehicles. Additionally, there are concerns related to the potential for people to lose control while operating low powered vehicles or that large tour groups might start using the seawall. Currently, there are challenges with crowded areas and conflicts between allowed active mode user groups on these facilities.

On November 15, 2017, City Council approved permanently allowing non-motorized skates, skateboards and push scooters in protected bike lanes. At that time, Council also inquired about the use of other non-motorized devices being used in a separated bike lane. The table below provides a summary of the various types of travel (motorized and non-motorized) modes and where they are permitted.

|                                       | Roadway | Sidewalk | Seawall & Park Pathways | Protected Bike Lanes | Private Property |
|---------------------------------------|---------|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <b>NON-MOTORIZED</b>                  |         |          |                         |                      |                  |
| Wheelchair                            | No      | Yes      | Yes                     | No                   | Yes              |
| Pedestrian                            | No      | Yes      | Yes                     | No                   | Yes              |
| Bike                                  | Yes     | No       | Yes*                    | Yes                  | Yes              |
| Skateboard/Push scooter/Rollerblade   | Yes**   | No       | Yes***                  | Yes                  | Yes              |
| <b>MOTORIZED</b>                      |         |          |                         |                      |                  |
| Motorized Wheelchair/Mobility Scooter | No      | Yes      | Yes                     | No                   | Yes              |
| Electric-Assisted Bike                | Yes     | No       | No                      | Yes                  | Yes              |
| Motorized Skateboard                  | No      | No       | No                      | No                   | Yes              |
| Segway                                | No      | No       | No                      | No                   | Yes              |
| Hoverboard                            | No      | No       | No                      | No                   | Yes              |
| Limited Speed Motorcycle              | Yes     | No       | No                      | No                   | Yes              |
| Motorbike                             | Yes     | No       | No                      | No                   | Yes              |

\* where signs permit

\*\* local streets only

\*\*\*although not technically allowed under the bylaw in practice parks allows and does not enforce

Finally, ICBC has a summary of the Motor Vehicle Act regulations as it relates to low powered vehicles located at this link <http://www.icbc.com/vehicle-registration/specialty-vehicles/Low-powered-vehicles/Documents/low-powered.pdf> which is also attached.

Please contact Winston Chou, Manager of Traffic and Data Management at 604.873.7913 or [winston.chou@vancouver.ca](mailto:winston.chou@vancouver.ca) if you have any questions or require more information.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Dobrovolny', followed by a large, stylized flourish.

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# low-powered vehicles

Do you own or ever ride a small motor scooter, bicycle with an electric motor, “pocket bike” or other small low-powered vehicle? While they might not look that different, some are legal for on-road use and some aren't. Driving an unlicensed or uninsured vehicle on B.C. roads could result in a ticket and driving without insurance could have serious financial consequences.

## Permitted on roads:

### Limited-speed motorcycle (small motor scooter)

Must be registered, licensed and insured. May be operated with any class of driver's licence. Cannot be operated on a learner's licence other than a Class 6 or 8 motorcycle learner's licence. Riders are required by law to wear a motorcycle helmet.



A limited-speed motorcycle is defined as:

- No more than 50 cc engine displacement or 1.5 kw motor rating.
- Does not require clutching or shifting after the drive system is engaged.
- Has a maximum speed on level ground of 70 km/h.
- Weighs no more than 95 kg excluding fuel and batteries.
- Wheels must be 25.4 cm in diameter or more.

### Electric motor-assisted cycle\*

A motor-assisted cycle is a two- or three-wheeled cycle with a seat, pedals and an electric motor. Does not require registration, vehicle licence or insurance. Operator does not require driver's licence but must be 16 years of age or older.



- Operator is required by law to wear a bicycle helmet.
- May be operated on the road like any bicycle, except where municipal bylaws restrict operation.
- The motor must be electric and have a total combined rated output of not more than 500 watts and be incapable of propelling the cycle at a speed greater than 32 km/h on level ground, without pedaling.

NOTE: Gas-powered cycles and electric cycles without attached pedals don't qualify as an electric motor-assisted cycle. That means they cannot be used on-road as they can't pass a provincial motor vehicle inspection and therefore cannot be registered, licensed or insured for on-road use.

\* Further details can be found in the *Motor Assisted Cycle Regulation*, BC Reg. 151/2002.

## Not permitted on roads:

### Scooter, motorized skateboard or self-balancing board

- May only be operated where B.C.'s *Motor Vehicle Act* doesn't apply, such as private property that does not have public vehicle access or on a trail or pathway if allowed by a municipal bylaw.
- Not to be operated on a public sidewalk adjacent to a roadway.



### Pocket bikes (mini motorcycles)

- Commonly referred to as “pocket bikes” or “mini choppers”, don't meet provincial vehicle standards for use on public roads.
- They are prohibited under the *Motor Vehicle Act Regulations* due to their wheel size, wheel base and seat height.



## Permitted on sidewalks, walkways, crosswalks, and paths:

### Motorized wheelchair

Does not require registration, vehicle licence, insurance or driver's licence.

- Motorized wheelchairs are treated similarly to pedestrians and may be operated anywhere that pedestrians are permitted to walk.



### Safety tips for operating motorized wheelchairs

- Ride only where it's safe and follow the same rules and guidelines as pedestrians.
- Use courtesy and think safety.
- Drive at the same speed as other pedestrian traffic.
- Be extra cautious of possible traffic as you approach driveways and laneways.
- Try to avoid sudden turns.
- Avoid using your motorized wheelchair if you're taking any medication, drugs or alcohol that may affect your skills or judgment.



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The information in this publication is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to provide legal or professional advice. We have used plain language to summarize some of the terms to help readers understand some of the laws affecting the topic of this publication at the date it was written. You should follow the more detailed wording and requirements of current applicable statutes and regulations, even if they differ from the information provided in this publication.