

ITEM #: 28
DATE: 12-09-25
DEPT: CMO

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **MODIFICATIONS TO MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTERS 4: BICYCLES AND 19: PARKS AND RECREATION TO ADDRESS PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION DEVICES**

BACKGROUND:

In October 2024, City Council directed staff to develop a micromobility ordinance for Council consideration. On [March 11, 2025, a staff report](#) was provided and presented to Council, which included 1) presenting research findings on micromobility ordinances in other communities and 2) outlining ordinance components being proposed, and seeking Council direction on various components.

Specifically, at the March 11, 2025, meeting, City Council directed staff to:

- maintain current rules governing where bicycles are allowed and not allowed to operate and extend those guidelines to other mobility devices.
- exclude City parks and refer considerations of micromobility in parks to the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission).
- direct staff to proceed with a 20 mph speed limit for non-roadway uses, except in City parks.
- include staff recommendations of exceptions for parades and ADA devices.
- request staff include signage concepts with the future draft ordinance on micromobility.

Important Note: While the term "micromobility" had been commonly used to describe using transportation devices such as scooters, e-scooters, e-bikes, etc., staff is recommending that the City use a more accurate term, "personal transportation devices". The definition being proposed is a slight modification of what the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization uses. A personal transportation device, therefore, is a "mobility device, which may be equipped with an electric motor for assistance or sole propulsion, designed for conveying the operator, with speeds of less than 20 miles per hour, but excluding a bicycle or low-speed electric bicycle".

Examples include: Any small, lightweight, electric-powered vehicle designed for single/tandem-passenger use, such as scooters, electric scooters, electric skateboards, one-wheelers, and similar devices. Any gas-powered device or higher-powered device than a 750 watt engine is already prohibited on sidewalks and shared-used paths.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

After the March meeting, staff developed an online survey to gather public feedback on the

use of bicycles and personal transportation devices. The Personal Transportation Survey was open from May 1 – May 16, 2025, and 257 responses were received. The purpose of this survey was to gather public feedback around bicycles and personal transportation uses and to use the input to inform any updates to City ordinances around the use of these devices. Staff has analyzed the survey results (see Attachment A - PTD Survey Analysis).

Notably from the feedback,

- 73.7% (approximately 180 people) of respondents felt somewhat safe or very safe using a bicycle or personal transportation device; 67.9% (approximately 166 people) felt somewhat safe or very safe being around these devices on the sidewalk; and 78.2% (191) felt somewhat safe or very safe being around these devices on a park path or trail.
- 79% of respondents felt most comfortable riding a personal transportation device in parks and trail, 51% were comfortable riding on bike lanes, 61.7% felt uncomfortable riding on a roadway (street), and about half of respondents felt comfortable riding on sidewalks.
- A majority of survey respondents (58.37%) supported no size restrictions on bicycles and personal transportation devices.
- Opinions were split on whether to have a speed limit or not, however, the primary area for support for speed limit restrictions were in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, like shared-use trails or sidewalks, although there was no clear consensus on what that speed limit ought to be (e.g., 10 mph, 15 mph). As such, the proposed ordinance suggests 20-mph everywhere except on road where other speeds are posted and Parks, since it was referred to the Park and Recreation Commission.
- When asked if survey takers have experienced or witnessed any issues with personal transportation uses, the most common issues observed were unsafe riding (50% or 130/257) and collisions or close calls with vehicles (49% or 126/257) and pedestrians (40% or 103/257).
- When asked what other safety concerns there are, the most common themes from responses related to 1) speed and users going too fast, especially on trails 2) pedestrian conflicts and the lack of warnings when passing 3) drivers not yielding and unsafe intersections 4) riders ignoring traffic laws and 5) lack of helmets or poor lighting, possible distracted riders.
- Other notable themes through the survey responses included 1) a desire for more safety and education learning opportunities 2) continue investing in dedicated infrastructure.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has discussed personal transportation device uses on City parks and trails at its meetings, and conducted a "Parks Rules" survey to get input from community members on a potential speed limit for these types of devices in City parks. The Commission recommends a 10 mph speed limit for bicycles and personal transportation devices in City parks. This new speed limit is included in the Parks Rule, which the Commission is authorized to set. Other proposed ordinance modifications to the Chapter 19: Parks and Recreation are before Council at this meeting as well to ensure any changes to *Municipal Code Chapter 4* and *Municipal Code Chapter 19* are complimentary.

In addition to the public survey conducted, Staff outlined possible changes to *Municipal Code* Chapters 4 and 19 and provided it directly to several local bicyclists and biking advocates who also shared it with their connections. Their feedback has been considered and many of their suggestions have been incorporated into the proposed changes attached.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 4; BICYCLES:

The primary changes to *Municipal Code* Chapter 4 consists of updating existing language to be clearer on the intent of what was already there and adding "personal transportation device". Significant changes include:

1. Adding Section 4.5 Definitions for bicycle and personal transportation devices;
2. Adding clarity on speeds not to exceed for roadways and non-roadway uses outside of parks (Section 4.9);
3. Adding an exception for riding on sidewalks for person(s) with a disability who uses a wheelchair or mobility device (Section 4.13);
4. Modification of lamps and reflectors required (Section 4.16);
5. Clarity on brakes required (Section 4.17); and,
6. New sections that address:
 - a. Sirens, whistles and horns prohibited (Section 4.18)
 - b. Parking (Section 4.19)
 - c. Impoundment (Section 4.20) and
 - d. Responsible Riding (Section 4.21)

The changes to *Municipal Code* Chapter 19 updates Section 19.9 creating an exemption for mobility device use for individuals with disabilities and updates language to address personal transportation device uses in parks.

The Parks and Recreation Department has already began designing the appropriate signs for installation in the parks. Signs will encourage appropriate speeds for multi-modal use on shared-use paths. See Attachment B and C for signs that will be installed at Ada Hayden Heritage Park.

Additionally, once the ordinance is fully in effect after final ordinance adoption, staff will work on educational opportunities to share the new rules with the community. This will include social media posts, emails to notification subscribers, and other educational materials.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve on first reading of the attached ordinance regarding Ames *Municipal Code* Chapters 4 and 19 to take effect immediately after final ordinance adoption.
2. Direct staff to modify the proposed ordinance and bring it back to a future City Council meeting for City Council consideration.

3. Do not approve first reading of the ordinance.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Updating *Municipal Code Chapters 4 and 19* will improve public safety and the use of bicycles and personal transportation devices. Modifying the ordinances provides clarity around requirements when operating such devices. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[DRAFT Ordinance Amending Chapters 4 and 19.pdf](#)

[Attachment A - PTD Survey Analysis .docx](#)

[Attachment B: Share The Path 24x18.pdf](#)

[Attachment C: Speed Limit 24x18.pdf](#)