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PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A local man gets a free helmet and scooter riding lesson at Pioneer Courthouse Square, downtown, after Bird, one of two electronic scooter companies permitted to set up shop in Portland, introduced the service on Thursday.

Scooter Rentals Begin

Pilot transportation option will be evaluated

BY DANNY PETERSON

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Electronic scooters have officially hit the pavement in Portland.

Two companies were allowed to set up shop for their app-based scooter services last week thanks to permits from the Portland Bureau of Transportation as part of a pilot program to test the compatibility of e-scooters in the city.

E-scooters are rented with credit cards through an app on a smart phone. They are electronically locked when not in use, and

left docked on the street for the next customer. The companies recharge them each night.

The two firms, Skip and Bird, each charge a \$1 flat fee and 15 cents per minute, but offer their own features.

Skip was the first company to incorporate a "tip-over detection," which notifies them when a vehicle is laid sideways and obstructing pathways so they can collect and move them, the company's CEO Sanjay Dastoor told the Portland Observer. Bird offers to waive the \$1 flat fee to people re-

ceiving state or federal assistance

E-scooters are meant to alleviate transportation needs by providing a new, affordable and environmentally friendly option to get people to their destinations.

The city prohibits riding the scooters on sidewalks, in public parking structures, or without a valid driver's license. Helmets and keeping scooters clear of walkways are also required.

PBOT said it will evaluate whether to continue to allow e-scooters at the end of the pilot period in November.

Supportive Housing for Homeless

An effort to tackle the issue of homelessness on two fronts—housing and mental health—was announced Friday in a joint statement by Mayor Ted Wheeler and County Chair Deborah Kafoury.

The bulk of the \$12 million supportive housing pilot funding was secured through Portland Housing Bureau, with additional funding from state and county funds.

Friday's press release emphasized the bundling of affordable housing and mental health treatment as a first-of-its kind for cross-governmental funding.

"Homelessness is a national humanitarian crisis. It will take more



Mayor Ted Wheeler (left) and Deborah Kafoury announced Friday a joint effort of local and state agencies to fund \$12 million of affordable housing with mental health treatment.

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