

# People are leaving e-scooters blocking city sidewalks, frustrating wheelchair users

Tamia Fowlkes, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

When Nick Rozwadowski, a Lower East Side resident, stumbled upon two Lime scooters blocking a sidewalk on Brady Street in June, he posted on Nextdoor.

"Could the City of Milwaukee and Lime be sued for violating the (Americans with Disabilities Act)?" he wrote.

Rozwadowski, who works at a retirement community, told Public Investigator that he began making complaints about the scooters out of concern for pedestrian safety.

"Quite honestly, I can't fathom the inconsideration of people who leave those e-scooters parked like that," he wrote in an email to Public Investigator. "I've reached out to my alderman about the problem and was bluntly told that he can do nothing about it.

Since Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson announced that dockless electric scooters would return to the city permanently in May, residents have raised concerns about the potential problems the scooters cause for people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs and the blind and visually impaired.

Across downtown, residents have documented scooters splayed across sidewalks and parked in front of curb cuts used by wheelchair and mobility device users — blocking their paths of travel and potentially causing falls and damage to their devices.

## How does the city enforce improperly parked scooters?

Rozwadowski's alderman, Jonathan Brostoff, responded to Public Investigator inquiry by directing the message to the city's multimodal transportation manager Mike Amsden, who forwarded questions to city spokesperson Tiffany Shepherd.

Shepherd, the spokesperson for the city's Department of Public Works, said scooter companies have two hours to respond to complaints of improperly-parked scooters. If the issue is left unaddressed, then the company and riders are subject to disciplinary fines.

Shepherd said fines vary based on the issue. Every improperly parked scooter that the city relocates results in a \$25 fine for the companies.

The city can issue additional, escalating fines depending on the number of days the scooter company is out of compliance per month. These fines can range from \$25 to \$200 per day.

However, Shepherd said the city did not have "readily available" data on the number of fines issued to Spin and Lime since the permanent program was launched this summer.

Scooter companies have 30 days to resolve outstanding issues and fines, or else they can be considered in violation of the contract.

## How do Spin and Lime keep riders accountable for parking properly?

Milwaukee's two scooter companies are Spin and Lime. Both organizations have designated teams that work full-time to relocate improperly-parked scooters.

Jimmy Gilman, a Spin spokesperson, told Public Investigator that the company takes a variety of steps to ensure that users park correctly. These steps include asking users to view a parking tutorial when creating a Spin account and requiring users to take a picture of where they parked.

Employees review those photos and issue warnings to users if the scooters impose unnecessary barriers on pedestrians.

Lime also requires riders to take an end-of-ride photo, uses GPS to track improperly-parked devices and issues fines for poor parking.

Jacob Tugendrajch, a Lime representative, said the company believes the solution is more scooter parking spaces.

"In most cities globally, everything was designed for cars. We want to reallocate parking space away from cars and to shared micro-mobility services," he wrote in an email. "One parking spot for a car can house between 8-12 e-bikes."

Riders who repeatedly park their scooters incorrectly can be banned by the companies from using their services.

Both companies recently met with Independence First, a Milwaukee disability social services organization, and hope to partner on an informational campaign aimed at promoting proper parking.

Marci Boucher, president and CEO of Independence First, said Lime and Spin have been in contact with Independence First since the scooter pilot program began.

"What is needed now is education. Leaving a scooter in the path of someone with a disability can literally stop them from leaving their home, catching a bus, or visiting a neighbor," Boucher said.

## Things to keep in mind when parking an electric scooter

Scooter users are advised to use street parking lanes or the sidewalk to park. In addition:

Ensure that your scooter is upright and not lying across pedestrian areas

Leave at least four feet of unobstructed passage on sidewalks and pedestrian pathways when parking

Do not block driveways, entryways, curb ramps, transit stops, parklets, loading zones, accessible parking spaces, or parking meters.

Use the City of Milwaukee e-scooter corrals

Pedestrians who see improperly parked devices are advised to immediately call Lime at (888) 546-3345 or Spin at (888) 249-9698. People can also contact Lime at [help-milwaukee@li.me](mailto:help-milwaukee@li.me) and Spin at [support@spin.pm](mailto:support@spin.pm).

It is permitted to move the scooter to prevent it from blocking a pathway.

For general feedback or questions about the dockless scooter program, citizens can contact the city's Multimodal Transportation team at [move@milwaukee.gov](mailto:move@milwaukee.gov)

Issues related to improperly parked scooters, scooters left on private property, unsafe riding, and more can also be reported to the city via the MKE Mobile Action App or by calling 414-286-CITY.

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