Scooting the Boundary: An Analysis of E-Scooter Policy Harmonization

George Mason University
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Agenda

- Team Introduction
- Project Context
- Methodology
- Analysis
- Findings
- Recommendations
Team Introduction

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Project Context

- E-scooters as shared mobility devices (SMDs)
- Research question
- Policy development: Pilot or Permanent
- Policy harmonization
  - Benefits
  - Challenges
  - Feasibility
- COVID-19 update
Methodology

- **Data collection**
  - Preliminary analysis of permit statutes from 22 cities across the U.S.
  - Literature review
    - Peer-reviewed articles
    - White-papers
    - Popular media and blogosphere
  - Personal interviews and brief conversations with
    - Federal/state/regional/local regulatory body members
    - Public and private planning practitioners
    - Third party aggregators
    - Transportation planning researchers

- **Case study selection**
  - Urbanized areas encompassing multiple jurisdictions
Analysis: Case Study Areas

- Washington, DC, and Northern Virginia
- Miami and Coral Gables, Florida
- Boston, Brookline, Somerville, and Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
- Los Angeles and Santa Monica, California
- Oakland and Berkeley, California
Analysis: Key Elements of Permit Ordinance

- Device specifications
- Right-of-way specifications
- Safety standards
- Insurance and financial liability
- Data sharing and compliance
- Geo-fencing requirements
- Permit fee structure
- Fleet specifications
- Equity and environmental justice
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Similar regulatory language between neighboring jurisdictions, but different implementation
Analysis: Factors Influencing Policy Harmonization

- Geographical context
  - Average trip distance and border length
- Operator selection
  - Decision scorecards
- Road rules
  - Unknowingly breaking rules
Analysis: Factors Influencing Policy Harmonization

- Safety standards
  - Helmet use
  - Sidewalk bans
- Geofencing
- Fee structure
Analysis: Levels of Harmonization

- Federal-level governance
  - Seat-belt regulation (IIHS)
- State-level governance
  - Preemption of ride hailing service regulation
- Local/Regional governance
  - Capital Bikeshare
  - Boston area dockless bikeshare
Analysis: Levels of Harmonization

- Local collaboration
  - City of Charlottesville, University of Virginia, and Albemarle County
- Customized harmonization
  - Centralized/Decentralized
  - A-la-carte/spectrum
Findings: Potential Benefits of Harmonization

- Users and non-users
  - Consistency of information
  - Improved accessibility for cross-border trips

- Regulatory bodies
  - Constant feedback loop

- Service providers
  - Increased market size
  - Economies of scale
    - Reduced costs
    - Ease of operations and compliance

- Others - Transit agencies, VCs, and MaaS aggregators
Findings: Potential Barriers to Harmonization

- Low cross-border activity
  - The percentage of internal trips is higher than cross-border trips
  - 10 percent of trips from Arlington County to DC
- Resistance to collaborative efforts
  - Disparate policies allow local customization
- Inhibited agility to update regulations
- Reduced opportunity for start-up operators
Recommendations

- Policy harmonization does not need to take a stance of All-or-Nothing
- Tailored harmonization can eliminate potential barriers
  - Role of partnering jurisdictions
    - Clearly defining priorities and equity goals
    - Travel demand surveys & community outreach activities
    - Actively collaborating in operator selection
    - Seeking mediation from MPOs for state or federal funding
  - Role of Bird and other operators
    - Actively complying with local regulations
    - Build robust government relationships through consistency in service
Moving Forward

Schar school press release

Peer-reviewed conference presentations and journals
Thank you

Questions?