

Provincetown Select Board reverses direction on certain motorized scooters

By Ethan Genter

@EthanGenterCCT

Posted Jun 28, 2018 at 7:38 PM

Updated Jun 29, 2018 at 6:29 AM

PROVINCETOWN — The Provincetown Select Board has walked back its decision to bar certain types of motorized scooters from locking up to town bike racks.

At its meeting Monday, the board voted to allow vehicles that don't need to be registered with the Registry of Motor Vehicles to park at the bike racks. Earlier this month, the board voted that scooters needed to park in parking spaces, prompting an outcry from Coast Provincetown, a business that rents a scooter-like vehicle in town.

The reversal was spurred by enforcement problems. Without a license plate or registration, police officers have nothing they can ticket, Assistant Town Administrator David Gardner said.

The brainchild of Heather Baker and Erika Apicella, Coast Provincetown rents URB-Es, pedal-less motorized scooters that have a throttle and can fold up smaller than a baby stroller. Other e-bikes in town look more like traditional bicycles but have battery-powered motors that aid riders when they pedal. Those pedal-assisted e-bikes can also park at bike racks.

URB-Es, which Baker and Apicella have said are technically e-bikes and should be regulated like bicycles, have been prohibited from going against traffic on Commercial Street. Special legislation allows bicycles to go both ways. The pedal-assist e-bikes were allowed to go against traffic on Provincetown's main drag, but that may also change.

The board has set a July 23 traffic hearing to consider amending the bylaw to address the use of electric-propelled vehicles flowing against traffic on Commercial Street and licensing.

The town has been challenged by how to regulate e-bikes and other types of motor vehicles, partly because the definitions for scooters and mopeds in state law don't apply to them, including, for example, the use of cubic centimeters to measure engine size, said Select Board member Thomas Donegan. Electrically propelled vehicles don't have engines measured by cubic centimeters, creating a gap in how the vehicles should be categorized.

The board plans to talk to town counsel in executive session about the definitions regarding these types of vehicles and asked the police department to enhance enforcement of speeding on Commercial Street, said Louise Venden, chairwoman of the Select Board.

Baker and Apicella said they felt they were being singled out. The board said it was wrestling with how to handle a broad range of vehicles and that Coast Provincetown was at the forefront because the owners are vocal and one of the first businesses of its kind in town.

"We have to make designations for regulations that cover the spectrum," said Select Board member Lise King. "It's become a big municipal challenge. It's not you guys personally."

— Follow Ethan Genter: [@EthanGenterCCT](https://twitter.com/EthanGenterCCT).