



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

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DATE: February 13, 2019
TO: Joint Committee on Transportation
FROM: Amy Joyce, Legislative Liaison
SUBJECT: HB 2671 – Motor Assisted Scooters

INTRODUCTION

Current law requires all motorized scooter riders to wear a helmet, and prohibits those under age 16 from operating them. The Department of Transportation calculates vehicle crash rates and injury rates based on far more data than what exists from the Portland scooter pilot. There may not be sufficient data to judge long-term injury impacts from scooters.

DISCUSSION

The Transportation Safety Division of the Oregon Department of Transportation is tasked with, among other things, providing highway safety information to the public.

Motorized scooters, though they have been in existence for years, only recently have become widely available under the Portland pilot of 2018. Portland Bureau of Transportation issued a report on the pilot. The PBOT report found several important statistics.

The PBOT report found approximately 700,000 scooter trips totaling about 800,000 miles. ODOT analyzes highway fatality and injury rates based on incidents per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, and the highway crash rate on incidents per one million vehicle miles traveled. There were 176 scooter-related emergency room visits during the pilot. Note that scooter riders are not required to report their crashes to ODOT, so the agency has no independent data. Therefore the emergency room data is all that is available to the Department.

With less than one million vehicle miles traveled, the data may be inadequate to judge long-term injury impacts from scooter use. In 2016, the most recent year complete ODOT data is available, the rates for all vehicles (although not scooters) on Oregon roads were:

- Crash rate: 1.64 / million vehicle miles traveled
- Injury rate: 121.6 / 100 million vehicle miles traveled

Also of note, 83 percent of scooter-related emergency room visits were from solo trips, meaning no car, bicycle, pedestrian, etc. was involved. The scooter rider simply crashed. The only required safety gear for scooter riders, under current law, is the helmet. This bill would eliminate the helmet requirement.

Finally, the bill language itself may lead young people to believe they can legally operate motorized scooters provided they wear a helmet. In fact, current law prohibits those under 16 from operating them.

SUMMARY

Very limited data exists regarding motorized scooter crashes and injuries, and not enough data by which ODOT would typically calculate a rate. The bill language may mislead young people to think they can legally ride a scooter as long as they wear a helmet.