**June 2, 2020**

**Ottawa Transportation Committee**

Ottawa City Hall

110 Laurier Ave W

Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

On behalf of the CNIB Foundation, I would like to provide the following information for consideration to the Ottawa Transportation Committee as part of agenda items 2 and 3 during the June 3, 2020 meeting.

The CNIB Foundation is pleased to see that Canadian jurisdictions are open to innovative approaches which have the potential to lessen greenhouse gases, reduce congestion on city streets, and better utilize public transit via first/last mile transportation.

While e-scooters are a convenient way of travel, they should not take precedence over the safety of pedestrians. CNIB is pleased to hear Ottawa is banning e-scooters on sidewalks, as this would have created unnecessary hazards for pedestrians with sight loss. Furthermore, we recommend e-scooters also not be permitted on Multi-Use Pathways (MUPs) as this is another space shared with vulnerable pedestrians. If e-scooters are permitted to travel within Canadian cities, expectations must be in place to promote the safety of both pedestrians and e-scooter riders.

CNIB Foundation is pleased to hear the City of Ottawa will:

* Require stickers on the vehicles with a bilingual "no sidewalk riding" message
* Report back to its Accessibility Advisory Committee within six months of the project
* Implement a public awareness and education campaign on etiquette and safe e-scooter use – we also encourage the City to include accessibility in this campaign

Pedestrians with sight loss, including guide dog handlers, cannot be expected to step off a sidewalk onto a street or rough terrain to avoid a collision with an e-scooter or navigate safely around an abandoned device parked haphazardly on a public pathway.

## **Enforcement of Safe Use**

CNIB Foundation is concerned about how the City of Ottawa and its e-scooter partner will enforce safe parking and use of these vehicles. Complaints to the City via 3-1-1 and injury data collection are insufficient mechanisms for capturing the impact of e-scooters in our community. This data does not capture a) incidents that cause minor injury but do not require medical attention or b) when an e-scooter is removed from being improperly parked in a pedestrian pathway without being reported to 3-1-1 or the e-scooter companies. Furthermore, it is likely that these minor incidents will occur more frequently than major ones, and so cannot be overlooked in the data.

We request continued consultation with Ottawa's disability stakeholders and additional accessible mechanisms to report unsafe e-scooter use directly to the City and its e-scooter partner. One suggestion is the use of a QR like code and accessible mobile app to report inappropriately parked e-scooters. We will also be speaking to e-scooter companies to ensure their mobile apps are accessible using text to speech and screen magnification. This will facilitate easier reporting of infractions.

Lastly, we would like the City of Ottawa to consider its responsibility for enforcing the safe use of personally owned e-scooters as this was not explicitly addressed in the City's plans how these will be monitored as geofencing will not work on privately owned scooters.

## **Recommendations:**

1. E-scooters must be treated as bicycles and operators must follow the same rules of the road as cyclists.
2. E-scooters should only be parked in designated areas which are clearly marked and are cane detectible. We support the City's suggestion of repurposing car parking spaces for e-scooters, as this would help keep the sidewalk clear from obstacles. If this is not possible then riders should park close to other items within the furniture zone on the sidewalk, without encroaching on the pedestrian clearway.
3. Designated parking areas must not impede a path of travel and a minimum of 1.8 meters space should exist around the parking area to enable pedestrians with sight loss to safely navigate around these designated areas.
4. E-scooters should include a scannable QR code prominently and consistently placed on the device and marked using tactile and high contrast lettering. If a vulnerable road user encounters an e-scooter, they will be able to know which companies the e-scooter belongs to and report accordingly.
5. When duly reported to micro mobility operators, expectations should be established by municipalities that prompt action is taken to remove the e-scooter and take it to a designated parking spot.
6. Municipalities should establish appropriate mechanisms and/or administrative penalties which will serve to discourage unsafe practices such as excessive speed or careless abandonment of e-scooters.

We hope the City of Ottawa will seriously consider the safety and accessibility needs of pedestrians who are blind or partially sighted when implementing e-scooter use within the City.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

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CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today.

We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast.