

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 607

(Senator Benson, *et al.*)

Finance

Environment and Transportation

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Motor Scooter and Electric Low Speed Scooter Sharing Companies – Nonvisual  
Access

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This bill requires a motor scooter and electric low-speed scooter sharing company to (1) include an embossed tactile display with contact information on each scooter made available to the public so that a blind or visually impaired individual can contact the company and (2) provide nonvisual access to its website and mobile application in a way that provides full and equal accessibility to individuals with disabilities, as specified, and is consistent with the standards set by the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. **The bill takes effect January 1, 2021.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not directly affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not directly affect local governmental operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** “Motor scooter and electric low-speed scooter sharing company” means a person that makes motor scooters or electric low-speed scooters available to the public for lease on a short-term basis. “Nonvisual access” means the ability through keyboard control, synthesized speech, or other methods not requiring sight to receive, use, and manipulate information and operate controls necessary to access information technology (IT).

**Current Law:** The Secretary of Information Technology has numerous duties related to the development, review, maintenance, and procurement of IT projects and services, including adopting by regulation and enforcing nonvisual access standards to be used in the procurement of IT services. The regulations governing nonvisual access standards are similar to many (but not all) of the standards required by § 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

“Motor scooter” means a nonpedal vehicle that has a seat for the operator, has two wheels, has a step-through chassis, has a motor that meets certain specifications, and is equipped with an automatic transmission. It does not include an electric low-speed scooter or a vehicle that has been manufactured for off-road use, including a motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle. “Electric low-speed scooter” means a vehicle that is designed to transport only the operator, is solely powered by an electric motor and human power, has a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour, and meets other specified requirements. It does not include an electric personal assistive mobility device or an electric wheelchair or other mobility aid used by a disabled individual.

## **Background:**

### *Motor and Electric Scooters in Baltimore City*

Baltimore City recently implemented a dockless vehicle permit program that allows authorized motor scooter rental services to operate in the city. The city has issued a permit to three companies (Jump, Lime, and Spin) to operate from August 1, 2019, through July 31, 2020. Baltimore City advises that each permit applied for and issued generates about \$70,000 in local revenues.

The scooter rental services allow individuals to rent electric scooters on a short-term basis to travel around the city. Generally, the scooters can travel at a maximum of 15 miles per hour and can travel about 15 miles on a single charge. Instead of having more traditional dedicated charging stations, the companies have established a system whereby they pay city residents (through a cell phone application) to take the scooters home, recharge them, and return them to streets for others to use. Since there is no identified charging location for users to leave the scooters, they can be found throughout the city, frequently on sidewalks.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) advises that the bill is intended to address an issue that blind and visually impaired individuals have been experiencing with motor and electric scooters both being ridden on sidewalks and left in the middle of sidewalks in Baltimore City. Even though the scooters generally include a warning that using the scooters on sidewalks is prohibited, many users do so anyway. While dangerous for any pedestrian, this behavior poses even more of a danger for blind and

visually impaired individuals who cannot see the scooters coming and get out of the way of an irresponsible user. Furthermore, scooters are sometimes left strewn in the middle of sidewalks, which creates tripping hazards, particularly for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

MDOD advises that blind and visually impaired individuals have little recourse to report problems and incidents related to motor and electric scooters; the bill, therefore, sets forth a way to contact those companies.

### *Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973*

In 1998, the U.S. Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities. The law ([29 U.S.C. § 794 \(d\)](#)) applies to all federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use EIT. Under § 508, agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access that is available to others.

**Local Revenues:** Baltimore City advises that the bill discourages businesses from participating in the city's dockless vehicle permit program, which creates the potential for decreased local revenues. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill's requirements for affixing embossed tactile displays (likely stickers) on scooters and making websites and mobile applications accessible to the visually impaired are not so cost prohibitive that companies would forgo engaging in a profit-making opportunity in the city. Implementation of the bill's requirements involves one-time costs for affected businesses, some of which operate in multiple cities within the nation and internationally.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 1243 of 2019 as amended, a similar bill, passed the House, received a favorable with amendments report from the Senate Finance Committee, and was special ordered until next session by the Senate. SB 805, its cross file, passed the second reading in the Senate with amendments, but no further action was taken.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 557 (Delegate Attar, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Disabilities; Maryland Department of Transportation; Baltimore City; mileiq.com; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 19, 2020  
rh/aad Third Reader - March 16, 2020  
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 16, 2020

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