SPIN Talking Points on Electric Scooter Legislation

What we can agree on - the basics of how cities and operators need to work together

The first year of scooters was perhaps the most painful part of this new transportation moment/boom. It did, however, show the enormous demand for smaller, electric vehicles - and the need for them to become a part of our transportation fabric.

As we look at this second wave - cities and companies realize they have to agree on certain parameters to work together:

- They need to share data in a way that protects privacy and mitigates exposure to breaches.
- They need to agree upon riding and parking rules.
- They need to establish uniform enforcement practices.
- They need to set rules around hardware and product consistency.
- They need to share revenue in a sustainable way that ensures a business model that the community can depend on long-term.
- They need to provide transportation access to underserved communities.

Why is the last-mile such a vexing issue?
People are constantly optimizing for convenience and efficiency in their daily commutes or travels around town. That could be shortening a walk with an electric scooter, beating traffic in a bike lane, getting to a public transit hub, or touring a new city in a smaller electric vehicle. And while many cities are strengthening their public transit systems, some neighborhoods are left at an awkward distance from central public transportation hubs -- making it difficult to get to work, visit family, or explore places outside of one's neighborhood. That's where different modalities come into play, making getting from point A to B more accessible and convenient for people without a car or unavailable public transit.

Is it really an issue? Why can't people just walk a little bit?
It definitely depends on where you live, where/when you work, and what your transportation preferences are. If you live a 15-minute walk from the closest public transit hub, electric scooters can certainly cut down your commute. If you work late at night at a restaurant, and public transit is unavailable, you can pick up a dockless vehicle to take you home in the early morning hours. And if you're a tourist in a city with nice weather, you might just prefer taking a smaller vehicle like a bike or scooter (as opposed to a bus or taxi).

Are scooters really a solution, or just a band-aid?
Electric scooters are not a one-size-fits-all solution, but they're certainly one of the solutions. Cities like Portland and San Francisco are seeing increased adoption of scooters over cars/ridesharing for short trips [According to a citywide survey in Portland, 34 percent of residents who used the scooters and took a survey said they had used e-scooters to replace driving their own car or taking an Uber.] In addition to scooters, we may see some people continue to use bikes. We may see others adapt different models of two-wheeled, electric transportation options. Regardless of what it looks like, more transportation modes will lead to increased mobility between places of work, leisure, and culture.

Autonomy seems like the ultimate solution, or is it not that simple?
Autonomy is the goal, but to achieve that, people definitely have to factor in things like parking, cost, and convenience. Transportation options are dependent on one's income, place of home and work, family situation, and physical ability.

If we could make infrastructure changes, what would they look like?
Cities like Detroit and Denver are working to increase miles of protected lanes, which carve out new space in the roads for smaller/slower-speed vehicles like electric scooters and bikes. Turning parking spaces into more people-oriented areas is also an infrastructure priority.

What's the best last-mile solution you see out there in the real world?
College campuses are an interesting last-mile use case for scooters. We're seeing students, professors, and faculty using dockless scooters to get to class and around campus in efficient ways. According to one student who lives in Coral Gables (where Spin has an exclusive partnership), scooters save him money. Instead of taking an Uber or Lyft, or dealing with parking or maintaining a car, scooters have become a convenient and cost-efficient option to travel two miles to class. In one of the campuses where Spin operates -- Troy University in Alabama -- scooters have seen 10x more usage per day than bikes.

Will this continue being a problem in the future, or are we seeing cultural changes (telecommuting, fitness, etc.) that make the last-mile problem less of a problem?
In the future, we'll likely see a more multi-modal transportation fabric, where people are combining modes to serve different purposes (ridesharing after a night out, an e-scooter to quickly get between meetings, a bike with seats for children). Turning streets into a welcoming space for people is critical to this mission. Whether you're a scooter rider, sanitation worker, or child walking home from school, building streets (and instilling pedestrian and driving practices) that are not only catered to cars will encourage safer, people-friendly urban environments.