

Item 24-0584: Bird Rides Update

Municipal Services Committee

Mon, May 06, 2024, 4:30PM

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 55:03

So we're gonna move—apologies, we are now going to move to our information item 24-0584 Bird Rides update. And Director Block, do you have something to say? Or—

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 55:17

I do. Well, I can—

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 55:18

—first or shall we—

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 55:20

I was just gonna point out that Adam Davis with Bird is here to talk to the committee.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 55:26

Okay. Okay. So Mr. Davis, come to the—and just state your name for the record. And so we can get it into the minutes.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 55:37

For the record. My name is Adam Davis, principal government partnerships manager for Bird. Appreciate the opportunity to be here. I know we're limited on time. So I'm happy to connect with anybody individually that may have any questions or want to dive into anything a little bit deeper, but your concerns are heard. I've had conversations with the director and the mayor and just understanding that these issues are persistent.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 56:05

We are committed to providing solutions in the hope of being able to continue a partnership in the city of Appleton whether that is the most advanced parking technologies that are out there, which we have and we can showcase to the city and happy to bring here but it's basically—again, second time, it's a—picture of physical dock, but cut that out and it's a virtual dock, but it controls then the same, within centimeters, that they have to be in the specific locations. In cities like Reno and others, it's yielded great success in this, and it has the least amount of restriction for the users that are still looking for that convenience, because we're not going to get people out of cars, if we make alternatives, less convenient for them. And so if they can't ride to what their destination is, they're just going to take a car and it, you know, we're back to square one. And so we were willing to implement the strongest technologies to improve the parking as I shared with the director and the mayor today.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 57:12

The same issues you guys don't want we don't want because it leads us here. We don't want the behavior that is not representative of the individuals. Like, we want the people like me that came to Appleton staying at the Courtyard and, you know, having to walk a mile and a half because an Uber is \$25 to get here and so there's no other option. But those people aren't noticed. The single mom whose car's broken down, and only has one way to get to work—those people aren't noticed. It's—I worked all day from Houdini Park today and might have gotten a little sun burnt, but it's very active, and there's—I saw behavior that was absolutely indicative of what a

community like Appleton wants and I saw others who weren't, but that's representative of any transportation. We're going to have individuals who don't follow the rules like we want, and we will take every step possible to make sure they're not on our platform because we don't want that behavior as well.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 58:14

Parking—we will put together any proposed plan for the most aggressive parking that we can implement. Again, it's basically virtual docks, but docking docks—virtual docks instead of physical docks—and then work in high pedestrian foot traffic areas like College Avenue, you know, where there's a lot of movement, limit deployments, limit parking, limit—I mean, there's all these different steps that we can take to make it a program that still accomplishes it but alleviate some of the concerns.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 58:47

And again, I your concerns are heard, they're not just, you know, inherent to Appleton. I work with many cities that have experienced this, and I want to work with you on solutions to still be able to provide another form of transportation outside of automobiles to residents and visitors like myself who do want to come to Appleton. So I know we have a minute so I'm happy to answer any questions again, or...

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 59:14

I think um the Chair of the Finance Committee is here.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 59:19

Yes, I'm—I can't stick around for the Finance Committee meeting, but I am in not such a time crunch that I have to be out here right at 5:30. So please don't call this meeting short on account of me.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 59:29

Okay. And I think the Finance Committee doesn't have a ton of agenda items. So, I mean, so we have a little bit of leeway is what—Director Block, did you want to speak now or—

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 59:41

No.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 59:42

You don't have—okay, okay. All right, um, Alder—I'm going to call an Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 59:47

Thank you chair. I think I'd like to see more information specifically on what these docking and restrictions that are available would be because they weren't brought up before and I don't know what they were look like.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:00:01

I put together a quick deck, but I don't think obviously time that would have showed a video of what that works looks like. But, if possible, I can share it with the director or whomever to disseminate it to this committee to show.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 1:00:16

Can I?

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:00:18

Yes, go ahead, Director.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 1:00:19

Could you just explain kind of how you did this afternoon about how you would take a photo of the area—right?—or scan the area is what you had mentioned?

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:00:29

Yep. So there's been a variety of different ways trying to tackle parking issues. First, it started docks and locks and stuff like that, but it—realize everything has unintended consequences. You have somebody complaining about a scooter parked in front of their business. Now just picture it locked to their business. So locks didn't work. And so then it kind of moved to virtual docks, but if you go to almost any city that had a virtual—or I'm sorry, a physical dock station. They're vacant now because nobody utilizes it, or it comes at such a cost to the taxpayer who has to, you know, cover hundreds of 1,000s of dollars a year to be able to have a docked station program in place, but most cities, it just doesn't exist anymore, because it either cost the taxpayers too much, and that the ridership's not there.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:01:19

And so through the evolution, of what doesn't work, virtual docs. And so we partner with Google on this, and it uses Street View, but you can make the docs anywhere. You can make them whatever size you want. They can be a small. You can put up a sign; you can put up tape; or you can have nothing because the user sees everything in the app. And so when it comes to parking, it can be—if it's at a street corner, or if it's lost space on the street to try to help with some of the parking or blocking issues on the sidewalks—that is seen in the app. And so the user has to have the scooter within that designated area within centimeters. If it's outside of it, they can't end the ride, and they're accruing charges. And so basically, it serves as a fine in and of itself without having to use the stick versus the carrot.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:02:12

And so they have to end the ride there. They see a balloon; it shows them where they have to go, if they're not close enough how far to move it over. But basically, it just forces them to have to put it there. Not saying that there's not going to be somebody that still doesn't ride and, you know, they would rather ride up to their hotel that night, and you know, we could work with the city to figure out if we want to put fees in place. But there are some times where people, especially females that are at nighttime, sometimes they want to get to their destination right outside the door versus having to park a block or, you know, however far away to one of these locations.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:02:48

But you have to scan your surroundings, and it picks up thousands of architectural points on all the buildings. It takes out trees, it takes out anything that can be moved, but it knows and it triangulates everything to the exact location of where that scooter is. There's no tricking it by standing over here, or you know, standing in the box and the scooter is over there. So it works, and it has the least amount of restriction possible. And what's great is it can be moved in real time. So if there's an event going on or construction, it's not like it's blocking. And we could say "It's this big for four scooters, but there's a large event and we want it to be 10 scooters." It can be expanded. And so it can all be controlled in real time, but accomplishes what cities are looking for and keeping the sidewalks clear, but still having the option for alternative transportation.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:03:43

Alright, I'm gonna ask super quick, and then I see you Alder Wolff and I see you, Alder Hartzheim. Can you name cities that are actually using this technology right now?

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:03:52

Yeah, Reno is a good example. They've they have 100% compliance with their parking in Reno. Most cities see between 90% improvement in it just because it—and then all the drops in 311s because everything is compliantly being parked. We still have our ground team out there in the rare occurrence, but Reno is a good example. UCLA, LA, but I can provide a list of—

Alderman Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:04:22

Okay. All right. Thank you. All right, I saw Alder Wolff. And I apologize if I saw you in the wrong order.

Alderman Nate Wolff (District 12) 1:04:29

Thank you, Chair. So my question, you said it has it runs through Street View on Google. Would that—would it be problematic if Street View is outdated?

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:04:41

So everything is current, and so it's triangulating points up to AWS and our vehicles are smarter than I am, and they have very precise chips in them. And these chips—

Alderman Nate Wolff (District 12) 1:04:52

Just checking on that because I mean, like naturally if it was looking at four lanes, and then—

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:04:57

Yes, so like with College Avenue there wouldn't be the issue. And we go out and remap from time to time as well just to make sure everything, but when you have construction on like a College Avenue, we would keep an eye on it and we would adjust the parking locations to be addressed the construction, but then also it will be updated once the construction is complete to be able to comply.

Alderman Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:05:23

Alder Hartzheim.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 1:05:24

Thank you, Chair. At what point do we just say the view is worth the climb on this? There's been a lot of climbing. Obviously, what's been presented as a parking solution, and that's one of the many problems that we've had with this with this service. So I'm concerned about the other things that come with this. We've had, after bar hours patrons very nearly busting their heads open on these things. We've had issues with not getting full payment. Obviously, there was a bankruptcy issue so that kind of explains it, but how are we to trust that this is going to continue to be something that we don't, as a city, have to worry about when it's really supposed to be a free service? It's not working out that way for us. I mean, we're even spending all this time discussing it. So I'm not sold just yet. I understand there are other technologies to be explored perhaps, but I really am not just—I'm just not sold on Bird at this point in Appleton. Thank you.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 1:06:11

Care to comment on that or...?

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:06:34

No, I mean, I completely understand, and you know the concerns of it, and we want to work with the city. And anytime that there's a change to transportation, it is going to take resources. Anytime you have any form of transportation—bike, skateboard, horse, anything—there are going to be individuals who don't act in a way that we want them. What's great about our system is if there's an incident with an individual on it, and the police

contact us or the city contacts us, they're banned from our platform, so—or if they're in doing some behavior that they don't want to, we know who that individual is.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:07:11

And so there are going to be instances—and I never want to set the example like we can stop all bad behavior, because it's just bad behavior is inherent, and what some people find fun, I do not—I don't understand it. But unfortunately, it takes away from the right purposes. And, you know, we haven't gotten it right every time, but dang, we're trying because there has to be other options than just automobiles in our cities.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:07:38

And so it's—we want to work with you. I will always be as transparent as possible. I am very much solutions oriented, and as I was telling the mayor and Dani—or the director—earlier today is I want Bird to be in Appleton in 2028 and beyond. And so what takes us to get there, I you know, I want to explore those solutions. But you're heard—100% heard—and your concerns are valid, and we take it very serious but would love the opportunity to continue at least exploring what those options could look like whether scaled back, you know, limiting around College Avenue, but it is a very—the stats of ridership in Appleton are extravagant compared to other cities of this size. So it is a testament to the city. People want to see it. People are coming here. But yeah, I just would love the opportunity. I know no actions taken tonight, but I would love to send some follow up information on it and continue the conversation.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:08:43

I think we've all sort of expressed the interest in getting any follow-up like the presentation they made. So I see Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 1:08:50

Thank you. I guess I was just gonna ask staff if there have been some discussions between staff and Bird about a new contract or if there's a, I guess, a request from staff in all of this from this committee?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 1:09:04

So at previous committee meetings, I purely brought it back as an update to let the committee know the progress that we were working through. After the conclusion of the last MOU, December 31 of each year, we usually have a wrap up internally with staff, gathering feedback, what went right, what went wrong, how can we make this better? Then we usually meet with Bird, which we did, to provide that feedback.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 1:09:32

There were three items that staff noted of concern, two of which were taken care of. One was the restructuring from bankruptcy. Two was the payments still due; those have been paid. And the last was just concerns on the operation of the Birds—safety and then the parking issues—and until we had a solution on that, that was staff's feedback after talking with Bird that we recommended we wouldn't move forward with that agreement until we had a solution in place.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 1:10:03

When that was presented to committee, the feedback was to stop negotiating. There didn't seem to be a desire to continue to bring forward an MOU. I passed that along, and that prompted, you know, Adam, rightfully so wanting to come and share information. So that's kind of what got us here today. And, of course, I will funnel follow-up information if that's what the committee desires. Committee directs staff to continue negotiations we will continue negotiations.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:10:38

Thank you. Anybody else? I thank you for coming today and talking to us. And, you know, as you, from the time that you spent seeing the previous part of the meeting, all things parking are really important.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:10:57

I do follow a lot of overnight parking topics at these meetings. So I—you're not alone.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:11:03

So we appreciate you coming in person. We'd understood that you would be virtual. Thank you for making the trip, and we'll look forward to getting that information disseminated. And...

Attorney Amanda Abshire (City Attorney) 1:11:14

Chair, is the request for Adam to provide maybe a copy of that and we can attach it to the agenda.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:11:21

I think—

Attorney Amanda Abshire (City Attorney) 1:11:21

Is that what I'm hearing from you?

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:11:22

I think that would that would—I think we'd like that if you could provide that information, and we'll get it attached to the meeting minutes so that we can all review it and share it with others.

Adam Davis (Principal Government Partnerships Manager - Bird) 1:11:35

Absolutely.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:11:37

Thank you.