

## Opening Statement

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Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications

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### Introduction

Thank you Cathaoirleach, and Committee members for the invitation to join you today.

I'd like to introduce Superpedestrian, and then share a few thoughts that may help this dialogue.

Superpedestrian is the thoughtful mobility company. We were spun out of MIT, the world-renowned research institute in the United States nearly a decade ago. Superpedestrian now operates shared mobility fleets using our LINK e-scooter in 60 cities across 10 countries. Our smallest fleet is 25 scooters; our largest is 5,000.

We also hold two-thirds of all the patents in the micromobility sector. We've thought a lot about safety, which is why we're pleased to participate in constructive dialogue about e-scooter safety and technology. I'd like to explore three themes with you that will help this discussion:

1. Do shared e-scooters help reduce car use?
2. How can we make sure that e-scooters are safe?
3. What can we do about pavement riding and other dangerous rider behaviours?

### Do shared e-scooters help reduce car use?

The short answer is yes. We operate the shared e-scooter trial zone in Nottingham, in the UK; which is a city similar in design to our Irish cities. It's the most popular programme in the country.

In January this year, our Nottingham users travelled 150,000km on our shared e-scooters. We know from our customer surveys that at least 30% of all rides replace short car journeys. So our shared e-scooters replaced some 45,000km of short car journeys in Nottingham in January.

This demonstrates that, when given the choice, many people do choose to replace short car trips with e-scooter journeys - even in the winter. If the *Amendments to Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021* is enacted, Irish people will soon be able to choose to travel by electric scooter rather than by car. This will help to reduce congestion and improve air quality in our towns and cities, which benefits everyone; not just those who use e-scooters.

We commend the approach in the *Amendments to Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021* of introducing a proposed maximum speed of 25km/h, which aligns with the maximum speed permitted for e-scooters in most EU states. Since electric scooters travel on the road, alongside motor vehicles, the speed difference between these different vehicles must be minimised in order to protect riders. If scooters were to travel any slower on a road, riders would be placed at serious risk.

Of course, 25km/h is a maximum permitted speed. Shared micromobility operators can control and enforce lower speeds that are set in collaboration with local councils, through no-go and go-slow zones using geofencing technology. In Nottingham, for example, our scooters can only travel at 8km/h in the designated go-slow zones, but can travel at 25km/h in other areas. This helps us balance safety for everyone.

### **How can we make sure the vehicles are safe?**

As one of the last countries in Europe to legislate for e-scooters, Ireland can benefit from recent advancements in e-scooter design and technology and require the highest standards - setting a global benchmark for safety.

We commend the recent proposed amendments by the Minister to the *Amendments to Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021* to ensure that certain characteristics of PPTs may be varied in the future. Companies like ours are constantly investing in new technologies to enhance safe micromobility offerings, and the Minister's proposed amendments should help to futureproof the legislation to ensure Ireland can benefit from these advances.

We believe safety starts with the vehicle. That's why we took two years and spent \$75m developing the safest e-scooter possible.

One key feature is our patented Vehicle Intelligence system, which we call VI. This runs 1,000 vehicle health checks every second, and fine-tunes performance to avoid failures. VI also helps us to avoid battery fires by constantly checking battery health, including temperature of individual cells. In more than 16 million km of operation, we have never had a battery fire, an issue which has recently affected other shared e-scooter models.

We call VI the "seat belt" moment for e-scooters. Just like seat belts are mandatory for cars in Ireland, we recommend that all e-scooters in Ireland should be fitted with an active safety system, like VI, as standard to ensure vehicle safety.

### **What can we do about pavement riding and other dangerous rider behaviours?**

There has been huge investment and innovation by the micromobility industry to solve some of its early challenges - and Ireland is well placed to take advantage of new methods and technologies that are proven to ensure safe shared schemes.

Let me give you an example.

Pavement riding - and associated dangerous rider behaviour - remains a key area of concern for many city councils, from Chicago to Paris.

Superpedestrian has developed a new technology that can detect and correct pavement riding and other dangerous behaviours (such as wrong way riding and intoxicated riding), in real time. Imagine a rider trying to ride along the pavement on busy O'Connell street. Our system would detect this immediately and bring the vehicle to a safe stop. It is the first system to do so, and we call it Pedestrian Defense.

This legislation is a really exciting opportunity for Ireland to enhance its transport networks, and I look forward to seeing shared e-scooters operating safely on our streets in the near future.

Thank you for your time, and I would be very happy to answer any questions.