



Submission to the Joint Committee on Transport and Communication – Road Traffic and Roads Bill



March 2022

Opening Statement

Bird is a last-mile electric vehicle company dedicated to bringing affordable, environmentally friendly, and safe transportation to cities and towns across the world.

Now trusted to operate in over 350 markets – half of which are in Europe – we provide shared micromobility programs through our electric scooter and electric bike partnerships with local authorities. Shared micromobility helps communities strengthen the local economy, alleviate traffic and parking congestion, reduce harmful emissions, and enhance transit access and first/last mile connectivity.

Bird is one of the few shared micromobility companies to research, develop, design and manufacture our own scooters. Our team of former automobile and aerospace engineers build to strict vehicle standards using components, systems and testing processes from electric cars. Our goal is to create the safest and most sustainable vehicles in the industry, which are built to last in all environments.

Last November, Bird became the first major micromobility company to list on the New York Stock Exchange, with a valuation of over \$2.3bn. The significant capital raised ahead of the public listing ensures Bird will continue to drive innovation. Introducing our industry-leading micro-EV's to Ireland is a top priority for us.

As the category creator operating in more cities than any other company, we have a wealth of data and experience in places large and small. We understand how to



partner with Governments and local Councils to help them achieve their own goals - in particular making their towns and cities more livable.

We applaud the progress the Irish government, and in particular Minister Ryan and Minister Naughton, have made in the creation of a new category of Powered Personal Transport, through which electric scooters will be legalised on Irish roads. In particular, we believe that the specifications set out in the legislation - with a maximum speed of 25 km/hr and a maximum weight of 55 kg - are appropriate to ensure electric scooters are a viable alternative to private car use.

Furthermore, we welcome the statement from Ministers Ryan and Naughton last week that the proposed maximum power rating of 250W for electric scooters could be adjusted through secondary legislation to account for technological developments as well as their safe and efficient use across hilly terrain.

We are encouraged by the fact that Minister Ryan has proposed outlawing the use of electric scooters on footpaths. Our view is that electric scooters, like bikes in Ireland, belong on the road or in the cyclelane, and that local councils should decide, in partnership with their preferred shared scheme providers, specific areas of the Council in which their use should be encouraged or restricted.

As an organization, our number one priority is safety, from a vehicle, from a rider, and from a general public perspective. We therefore welcome the strict prohibition and appropriate sanctions against the consumption of alcohol while operating an electric scooter. And, while helmets and high-visibility clothing should not be made mandatory through the legislation due to the impact it would have on modal shift, it is essential that we educate the public on the importance of using such protective equipment.

That is why Bird recently announced a first-of-its-kind partnership in Ireland with the launch of our E-Scooter Safety School. The partnership with the Irish School of Excellence - Ireland's largest youth driving school - will see 80% of all secondary schools in Ireland have access to best-in-class e-scooter safety training for those 16 and older.

Our E-Scooter Safety School will launch as soon as legislation is passed, and will be available in every county and indeed constituency across the country, teaching participants essential safety requirements such as: the rules of the road, how to park properly, how to ride safely and how to interact with other road users, including those



who are more vulnerable. Bird would be delighted to extend an invitation to all members of this Committee to attend such a safety course in a school in their locality, or alternatively to set-up a demo of this course for Committee members.

In summary, we are thrilled by the potential Ireland holds for the uptake of shared micromobility. While Ireland remains heavily reliant on the car as the primary mode of transport, even for journeys under 2km, we believe that this legislation could be the dawn of a new era of sustainable travel across the country, complementing existing and planned infrastructure.

Studies have shown electric scooters could help us reduce emissions from energy consumption by 68% by 2030, which is in line with the Irish Government's goals of reducing emission from transport by 42-50% set forth in the Climate Action Plan 2021. Ireland is in a unique situation whereby the current date of adoption of this new transport mode allows you, Committee members, to take learnings from mature markets across the world. There can be no one-size-fits all approach, and so we warmly welcome the invitation from the Committee today to share our learnings from our 350 markets, and offer our views on what constitutes best-practices, so that the Committee can develop a bespoke set of rules for Personal Powered Transporter users domestically.

We thank you all for taking the time to listen to our opening remarks and look forward to your questions.