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PERSONAL DELIVERY DEVICE (PDD) PILOT PROGRAM PASSES CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL

The pilot program will evaluate the operations of remote devices designed to deliver food to customers

CHICAGO — Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced City Council approval to allow a Personal Delivery Device (PDD) pilot program to operate under the City's Emerging Business Permit. Under the pilot program, PDD companies will partner with local food establishments as a courier service to deliver food orders to customers using small robots traveling on sidewalks and in crosswalks. The robot delivery services are app-based and partner with food establishments to make deliveries within a small radius of the restaurants and grocery stores. The companies operating PDDs will operate under an Emerging Business Permit issued by the Chicago Department of Business Affairs & Consumer Protection (BACP) in accordance with pilot program terms managed jointly by BACP and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT).

"I am focused on helping our business community thrive with new and creative ways to support both businesses and their patrons," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The Personal Delivery Device Pilot Program not only gives businesses the opportunity to test new delivery options safely but also helps the City determine how these devices can integrate into our existing sidewalk traffic and improve services for residents."

The Emerging Business Permit is intended to support new business ideas that don't fall under existing business license categories. Such permits have a non-renewable duration of two years and are subject to operating conditions and terms tailored to particular business activities.

"The ability to safely regulate the Personal Delivery Device pilot program is what the Emerging Business Permit was created for," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "The permit framework provides an opportunity for businesses to safely test emerging ideas in the context of a temporary pilot program. This pilot program allows us to ensure accountability and transparency to effectively evaluate this new industry."



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The passage of the Code amendment defines PDDs and allows their operation on sidewalks and in crosswalks under a two-year Emerging Business Permit. PDD programs have rolled out successfully in a number of cities in recent years, including Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Pittsburgh, along with multiple college campuses across the U.S.

“During the pilot program, CDOT will assess whether these Personal Delivery Devices can be used safely and effectively without inconveniencing other sidewalk users,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “These devices have the potential to replace vehicle delivery trips while supporting local businesses. Allowing PDDs to operate on select sidewalks and crosswalks through this small-scale pilot program will allow Chicago to regulate and better understand this growing industry for the benefit of all residents.”

A working group with City agencies and community partners has evaluated this industry and concluded that, within the scope of a small-scale two-year pilot program, such devices would keep Chicago competitive in this emerging market alongside other large cities. The pilot period of the program will assess PDDs in Chicago, such as their use of sidewalks and crosswalks alongside pedestrians, as well as their facilitation of neighborhood-based commerce.

The City will administratively issue Emerging Business Permit terms governing the permit application process and operation of PDDs during the two-year pilot. The code amendment includes defining PDDs, allowing the operation of PDDs on sidewalks and crosswalks, and forbidding the operation of PDDs unless the operator has received a permit allowing PDDs to be operated on the public way and within geographic zones as specified in the permit rules. The PDD pilot program will bring a new and modern delivery system to Chicago for quick and accessible food delivery.

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