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In a mostly lawless industry, electric scooter company CEO suggests the industry police itself

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- Bird, a company that rents electric scooters via a mobile app, has proposed a voluntary code of conduct to regulate the emerging bikeshare industry.
- Thousands of scooters, bikes, and electric bikes have hit San Diego's streets in the last month, creating a sensation over the new way to get around, but frustrations remain over how they are blocking sidewalks.
- One of Bird's competitors, Ofo, says that the voluntary code is a way to avoid regulations.

Nearly a month after thousands of bikes and scooters rented through a mobile app hit San Diego's streets and sidewalks, one company has proposed a voluntary agreement to get the emerging industry to police itself.

Bird, a company that lets riders rent motorized scooters, unveiled Save Our Sidewalks, or S.O.S last week and challenged its competitors to sign on. The three-part covenant is an attempt to make the emerging but largely unregulated industry a better neighbor.

"We started this pledge based on our belief that we are all in this together," said Kenneth Baer, a spokesman for Bird, in a statement. "And by that, we mean not just all the companies competing to replace cars for last-mile trips, but also the communities we are serving. If we get this right at the start, then we can transform transportation, curb traffic, get people out of cars, and reduce carbon emissions."

One of Bird's competitors, however, is criticizing the proposal as an attempt to avoid rules and to discourage cities where the rental companies operate from creating new regulations.

“It’s important to understand the broader context here and that Bird has shown a clear trend in operating first without prior approval,” said Taylor Bennett, a spokesman for Ofo, in a statement. “This is about deliberately bypassing cities and rules, putting untested, unregulated e-scooters on the streets without permission.”

Santa Monica previously filed a criminal case against Bird after it operated in that city without required permits, a case that was resolved for \$300,000 in fines and fees. Bird and another scooter-rental company, LimeBike, also operate in San Francisco where the nimble vehicles aren’t specifically permitted and regulated in local regulations, nor are they prohibited.

State law largely governs scooter riders, and regulations require users to wear helmets, have a driver’s license or instruction permit and not ride on the sidewalk. Regulations also prohibit electric scooters as well as bikes from being parked in a way that block pedestrian traffic or are parked on their side. There are also rules that prohibit companies from doing business in San Diego parks without governmental approval.