

## TRANSPORTATION

# Indianapolis' scooter cap took effect at the end of June. Bird exceeded it 13 days in July.



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When it comes to counting scooters, definitions are important. That's what Bird and Indianapolis learned this summer, when the scooter company exceeded caps put in place by the city.

According to city numbers, Bird deployed more scooters than allowed on 13 days in July, while its competitor, Lime, stayed under the cap. Implemented in late spring and in effect on June 29, the cap limits Bird and Lime to 1,000 scooters per day.

At issue was a difference in how the city and Bird defined a "deployed" scooter. The city defines a "deployed" scooter as any scooter "provided by the company for public rental," Department of Business and Neighborhood Services spokeswoman Brandi Pahl said.

A Bird spokesperson would not explain how its counting method differed.

"We've worked closely with the city to come to an industry standard definition of what counts as a deployed vehicle," the Bird spokesperson replied in an email when asked about its definition.

**The city passed new rules on scooters.** But there's wiggle room.

While the city's count showed daily totals with as many as 437 scooters over the cap, Bird's "internal analytics would have shown them below 1000," Pahl said.

From July 18 to July 30, Bird averaged 1,352 scooters per day, according to analysis of city numbers. It topped out at 1,437 scooters on July 19.

Bird averaged 530 scooters per day in the other 18 days in July.

Lime averaged 804 scooters per day in July and did not exceed 1,000 scooters on any day, according to city numbers. It deployed the most scooters in the month on July 10, with 902.

## **How the scooter cap works**

The cap was the city's first significant change to its scooter rules since their June 2018 arrival. While the rules limit the number of scooters and impose geographic restrictions, they also let companies increase the number.

Companies may request a cap increase if their scooters are used more than five times per day on average.

Both Bird and Lime average approximately three rides per day per scooter, the city said. If the average falls below two rides per day over the course of a month, rules say the company must immediately remove its scooters.

Bird and Lime also can request an increase for a special occasion, such as Labor Day weekend, when the city gave permission to increase the caps by 500 scooters.

The new rules do not list consequences for not following them; however, the city said it doesn't plan to take action against Bird for July's numbers.

"We do not plan to penalize Bird for exceeding the limits," Pahl said. "We made them aware of the calculation discrepancies, and they have subsequently come into compliance."

Bird said it "intends to stay within the limit the city set."

IndyStar received the data showing the exceeded caps on Aug. 30, a few days before the city issued Bird and Lime new licenses to operate through Sept. 4, 2020.

Sonya Seeder, the Bureau of License and Permit Services administrator who plays a role in issuing the licenses and helped create the caps, said the new rules have been successful so far.

"The regulations are achieving their purpose of ensuring the amount of scooters distributed are proportional to the public's use of them," Seeder said in an email to IndyStar.

Data sets showing the number of scooters deployed by Bird and Lime in August were not available at the time of publication.

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