

Telecommunications, Media & Technology Update

New Regulations on the Use of Personal Mobility Devices in Singapore¹

Overview

As you walk on public paths, you have probably encountered someone zipping past you on power-assisted bicycles (“**PABs**”), or personal mobility devices (“**PMDs**”) such as e-scooters and hoverboards. With their speed and convenience, such modes of transport have become an increasingly common sight in Singapore. Given the rise in accidents involving PMDs however, the Singapore Government has seen fit to pass legislation to regulate the use of PMDs in Singapore. Such efforts have thus culminated in the Active Mobility Bill (Bill No. 40/2016) (the “**AMB**”), which was recently debated and passed in Parliament on 10 January 2017.

A PMD is defined to mean a vehicle designed to be used to carry people only. Given that technology associated with these devices is developing rapidly and there is a need to respond quickly to changes in technology, the term is defined broadly. Examples of PMDs are skateboards, electric-powered scooters, hoverboards and Segway human transporters.

On the other hand, a PAB means a bicycle that is equipped with an electric motor and may be propelled either manually or by the electric motor, or a combination of the two.

New Regulations under the Active Mobility Bill

Under the AMB, whether you may use your PAB or PMD on a particular pathway will depend on the type of public path it is. For example, only PMDs may be used on *footpaths*, i.e. paths provided for pedestrians, or for PMD users, but not PABs.

If however the public path is designated as a *pedestrian-only path*, the use of either PMDs or PABs is generally off-limits unless, for example, obstructions on alternative paths make the use of such paths impractical for riders.

Regardless of the type of path however, PAB and PMD users are prohibited from exceeding the paths’ prescribed speed limits. At the moment, the maximum speed limits are:-

- 15 km/h for footpaths; and
- 25 km/h for shared paths for both pedestrians and riders (whether of PABs, PMDs or bicycles).

In addition, PABs or PMDs whose construction, weight and/or accessories do not comply with legal requirements are not allowed on either foot paths or shared paths. PAB and PMD users found in breach of this rule will be liable to a fine up to \$5,000 and/or an imprisonment term of up to 3 months. Users of such devices are therefore advised against making illegal modifications of their devices.

¹ The writers would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Ms Tan Siew Ann for her assistance in drafting this article.

Volunteer Public Path Wardens

While the Land Transport Authority (“LTA”) may appoint public path wardens from among auxiliary police officers appointed under the Police Force Act (Cap 235), and employees of any public authority who are suitably trained to be public path wardens, what is probably interesting is the concept of “volunteer public path wardens”. To be an appointed volunteer public path warden by the LTA, the only statutory requirement is the individual must be at least 18 years of age, and is not an employee of LTA or any public authorities. In essence, the volunteer will not have powers to seize or arrest, but will have limited enforcement powers such as to obtain personal particulars of individuals suspected of committing an offence. In contrast, a public path warden may have the power to take statements from an individual suspected of committing an offence and from any complainant against an individual, and to require such an individual to make and sign a declaration of the truth of the statement made by the individual.

Generally, a volunteer public path warden is expected to carry out regular patrols to educate the public on safe practices on public paths and deter reckless behaviour. At the present time, LTA has enlisted the help of Active Mobility Patrol Volunteers from the community and grassroots in this regard. It remains to be seen if more individuals will be recruited for such purposes.

Conclusion

Such changes to the law are to be welcomed as they are intended to provide greater protection to pedestrians. At the same time however, pedestrians are reminded not to be complacent but also to do their part to ensure their own safety when walking on public paths.

Should you have any queries as to how this update may affect you or your organisation or require further information, please do not hesitate to email us.



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This article is intended to introduce the Active Mobility Bill in Singapore, and it is not intended to be comprehensive nor should it be construed as legal advice.