



March 25, 2024

Dear President Giattino and Members of the City Council,

I write to share with you that I have signed ordinance B-654 into law. It is with a measure of reservation that I affix my signature to this document recognizing its shortcomings, limited enforceability, and lack of practicality. However, I do so in the spirit of collaboration and with a sincere desire of reaching our shared goal of ensuring pedestrian safety on the sidewalks of Hoboken.

Along with Police Chief Steve Aguiar and several members of the e-delivery bike working group, I have continued concerns regarding the enforceability and practicality of this ordinance. Nonetheless, I believe it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate good faith in our commitment to address this issue. While it is true that a veto may have temporarily halted the progression of this legislation, it would not have advanced us any closer to a comprehensive solution that truly serves the needs of our community.

There are some good concepts in the ordinance that I support, such as the wearing of a vest for individuals delivering food and employed by delivery app companies. There are other concepts that I remain concerned about, especially the inevitability that immigrant communities - which make up a large majority of those conducting e-bike deliveries - will be disproportionately targeted. As I mentioned in previous communication:

“[Immigrant groups are] less likely to have the documentation needed to obtain the registration that the proposed ordinance would require, potentially reducing the ordinance’s effectiveness from just a practical sense. Moreover, focusing enforcement on a group that is already reluctant to engage with law enforcement agencies could cause fear and opportunities for negative interactions...”

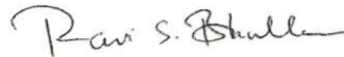
I wish to express my gratitude for the diligent efforts that each of you has contributed thus far in crafting this ordinance. However, it is clear that while the ordinance is a small step forward, our work is far from finished. It is imperative that we reconvene and engage in honest dialogue to develop an improved ordinance that not only addresses the concerns of our residents but also garners the support and cooperation of key stakeholders such as the Hoboken Police Department and Transportation Department.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the next iteration of this ordinance recognize the impact of the delivery app companies' operations model, which incentivizes as many deliveries as possible in a short period of time, contributing to this issue. Without an updated ordinance that holds these companies accountable for their riders' behavior, I don't envision any actual change in rider behavior.

In closing, let us redouble our efforts and recommit ourselves to the task at hand, and come up with short, medium and long-term strategies through the working group to thoroughly address this issue. Without a more substantial plan that includes these comprehensive solutions, including but not limited to a much-improved e-delivery bike ordinance, my administration will support the Hoboken Police Department in prioritizing existing laws and ordinances in our City Code, which have yielded approximately 200 tickets for e-bike violations the second half of 2023.

Together, I am confident that we can forge a path forward that prioritizes the safety and quality of life of all Hoboken residents. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to an updated ordinance that addresses the concerns above and mentioned in previous communication.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ravi S. Bhalla".

Ravi S. Bhalla

Cc: Jason Freeman, Business Administrator
Steven Aguiar, Hoboken Police Chief
Ryan Sharp, Director of Transportation and Parking
Ken Ferrante, Director of Public Safety