

TRANSPORTATION

## Revel Scooter Sharing Service Ceases After Ridership Plummetts

*The Brooklyn-based transit startup says it will now focus on its growing electric vehicle ride-sharing fleet.*

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NOV. 20, 2023, 12:15 P.M.

REPUBLISH



A Revel scooter sits ready in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, July 27, 2022. Credit: Ben Fractenberg/THE CITY

When Revel shuttered its electric moped service in the city on Saturday, the Brooklyn-based tech startup left a trail of fatalities and injuries suffered after New Yorkers began cruising city streets on the distinctive blue two-wheelers in 2018.

The [company pulled the plug](#) on its shared-two-wheeler system in New York and San Francisco as part of its shift to electric vehicle ride-hailing amid a sharp decline in the number of moped rides, after retreating earlier from [Austin, Washington, D.C.](#), and Miami.

A Revel spokesperson said usage of the electric mopeds in New York City fell to 137,000 rides in July, down 30% from one year earlier during what had traditionally been the peak season, with up to 3,500 of the vehicles on the streets.

It marked a low-key exit for the electric mopeds that Revel officials said provided about 8 million rides since first [rolling out in Brooklyn](#) more than five years ago — and which were involved in five fatalities between 2019 and 2021, according to the city Department of Transportation.

Jason Malave's brother, Jeremy, was [killed July 28, 2020](#), at age 32 after he lost control of a Revel and struck a Woodhaven Boulevard light pole at around 3:15 a.m., according to police. Malave said he was not sorry to see the shared mopeds go.

“People were going the wrong way, goofing off, not wearing helmets, improperly parking them,” Malave, 38, told THE CITY. “Even after my brother's death, I saw three people on a single scooter and it pissed me off to see people operating them so recklessly.”

Malave said the shared mopeds were too easily accessible to inexperienced users, noting that he could not recall his younger brother ever riding a moped before his fatal crash.

He said police told the family that his younger brother had a blood-alcohol level that was well above the legal limit to operate a motor vehicle.

“I just thought it was weird that as long as you had a valid New York State license, that you could rent a scooter without any proper training or having any knowledge about how to ride one,” he said. “I wish I had been around when he decided to make that decision.”

Jeremy Malave's death came 10 days after CBS2 reporter [Nina Kapur](#), 26, was killed while riding on a Revel moped as a passenger in Brooklyn. The fatalities occurred weeks after a [Revel-commissioned safety study](#) found that the early performance of the mopeds in the city indicated “a higher safety rate than other modes,” including motorcycles.

The 2020 report noted that the rental mopeds could top out at 30 miles per hour, but that the average speed for all rentals was 12.3 mph, while adding that “Revel has not been thoroughly evaluated in terms of safety.”

The deaths led to a one month [service shutdown](#) while the company and the city DOT established [new safety protocols](#).

“Unfortunately it took the death of the CBS reporter to take a pause,” said Daniel Flanzig, a Long Island lawyer who estimated he filed “15 to 20” lawsuits against Revel accusing the company of insufficient training and poor

moped maintenance. “Before we got there, there were plenty of people spending weeks in the hospital because of fractured bones.”

Flanzig said Revel users who were injured while operating or riding on the mopeds were legally hampered by having agreed to terms of service that led to their cases being heard in arbitration rather than in court.

“This is a cautionary tale for the continuation of these types of app-based systems,” Flanzig told THE CITY. “When you sign up, you accept the terms of the membership, and one of the things you did with Revel is give up your right to sue Revel.”

The lawyer, along with DOT, acknowledged that Revel did make strides in safety after the city Department of Transp worked with the company to tighten protocols. Those measures included expanding the in-app [safety quiz](#) for users, who were also required to take a photo in a helmet before a moped could be activated.

“At some point, they did learn how to be more responsible and not just have the free-for-all we saw in the beginning,” Flanzig said.

DOT said there New York City had seen zero Revel fatalities after the department adopted [rules](#) in the fall of 2021 to regulate shared mopeds.

A Revel spokesperson told THE CITY that the stricter safety rules resulted in a “significant rise” in helmet compliance among users of the electric mopeds. But the spokesperson declined to specify how many were suspended for violating safety rules, including those that prohibited riding on sidewalks or in bike lanes, [crossing East River bridges](#) or not wearing a helmet.





A Revel scooter rider heads over the Williamsburg Bridge into Manhattan in 2020. Credit: Jose Martinez/THE CITY

“Transparency would be good,” said Jon Orcutt, a former top DOT official. “If the city wanted to do something about it, they could have, but for some reason, it was not done.”

Now, Revel is focusing on its all-electric fleet of more than 500 ride-hail vehicles and 1,000-plus drivers employed by the company, while it also keeps building out a network of public [fast-charging electric-car hubs](#).

The company recently opened a charging station in Maspeth, Queens, after previously opening Brooklyn sites in Bedford-Stuyvesant and South Williamsburg. Other 24/7 public charging hubs are planned for Port Morris in the The Bronx and Pier 36 on Manhattan’s Lower East Side.

“They expanded as far as they could expand with the mopeds,” Flanzig said. “They see the value in other programs, such as their cabs and the charging hubs.”

Revel’s evolving presence in the city has left Jason Malave thinking back to his brother’s death more than three years ago in Queens.

“I still don’t know what was on his mind to get on that scooter when he did,” Malave said.

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