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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

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Columbus Mayor, City Attorney and Police Chief Outline Plan to Crack Down on Illegal, Unsafe Use of Motor Bikes on City Streets

Top city officials commit to bolster enforcement, prosecution of those who illegally ride motor bikes on city streets and threaten public safety

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein, and Columbus Division of Police Chief Elaine Bryant today outlined a plan to step up enforcement and prosecution of individuals who illegally ride vehicles like dirt bikes and ATVs on city streets, titled "Operation Wheels Down." Public safety officials have seen an increase in calls from citizens complaining about noise and safety concerns due to motor bikes in recent weeks as the weather continues to warm in Columbus.

Operation Wheels Down will take place multiple times throughout the spring and summer, utilizing intelligence and officers in the field to deter illegal operation of vehicles like ATVs and dirt bikes and step up enforcement of violations. Cases will be turned over to the City Attorney's Office for aggressive prosecution to hold riders accountable and keep Columbus streets safe.

"These vehicles, when driven recklessly and illegally on city streets, double as an unacceptable public nuisance and a clear threat to community safety," said Mayor Andrew J. Ginther. **"This kind of behavior will not be tolerated, and we are coordinating closely with all our partners across the city to leverage our combined resources, and strengthen enforcement and prosecution in ways that promote safety and maximize accountability."**

Columbus City Council passed an ordinance in 2021 enhancing penalties for illegal, reckless operation of certain vehicles on city streets. The emergency measure created the misdemeanor charge of reckless operation of an ATV or dirt bike, which calls for a minimum fine of \$500, a maximum fine of a \$1,000, impoundment of the vehicle and the potential for up to 30 days in jail.

"The City takes seriously our duty to protect the safety and security of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and all who use our streets. Illegally and recklessly operating any vehicle on city streets will be prosecuted—period," said City Attorney Zach Klein, whose office will oversee the prosecution of cases forwarded from CPD. **"Our office will continue to work alongside CPD and public safety officials to keep our streets safe as we head into the summer months."**

Columbus Police received hundreds of calls for service in the past year from city residents concerned about how dirt bikes, ATVs and other motor bikes are being operated in neighborhoods across the city, citing public safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike, as riders have been seen popping wheelies, doing burnouts and driving toward oncoming traffic and violating other traffic laws in heavy traffic areas like downtown, the Short North and along Livingston Avenue.

“Consider this your notice: our officers and law enforcement partners will be on the lookout for this dangerous behavior. You won’t know where or when. This is not a game, and when we catch you, there will be consequences,” said Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant.

In a similar, limited operation conducted in 2021, there were 11 people arrested or summonsed, 11 ATVs or dirt bikes impounded and seized, 2 stolen ATVs or dirt bikes and 5 firearms recovered, and multiple misdemeanor and felony charges were levied against offenders.

****Editor’s note: [Here](#) is a link to footage for use of examples of reckless, illegal operation of ATVs and dirt bikes on city streets.***

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