Why We Need Scooters!

Meredith's now-classic post on scooters buried within it a crucial question: what do you call someone who rides a scooter? Meredith herself suggested "scooterist" or "scooter-rider."

The hard-working staff here at Legal Planet fiercely debated the issue. I originally thought that the name for someone who rides a "scooter" is…"scooter." The point is that a scooter ***scoots,*** and so does someone who rides it. Julia argued for scoot***or*** as a way of differentiating it, but that's too precious.

I asked my Facebook page. No consensus: many insisted on "scooterer," and that is possible. Yet another pointed out that "scooterist" is in fact in the dictionary, but it's not in the OED, so it is still open.

Perhaps the best comment came, as it does so often, from our friend Will Schroeer, one of the leading smart growth advocates in the country. Will is the former state policy director for Smart Growth America and currently heads East Metro Strong, an organization devoted to increasing transit equity in and for St. Paul and environs. Will wrote:

> Term for:
> – Person using a scooter: "person using a scooter"
> Similarly:
> – Person using a bus: "person using a bus"
> – Person driving a car: "person driving a car"
> – Person walking: "person walking"
> – Etc.
>
> When we divide people up into modal categories, we make it harder to have a civilized conversation about how we all get around and what we need to do so safely. The word "Cyclists", rightly or wrongly, seems to bring up images of Lycra in a lot of people's minds. And makes it easy to be against "them" and building anything for them.
>
> Is "a kid using a bike to get to the library" a "cyclist"? I don't know. I do

> know, she needs a safe street or bike path to get there. And accurately described in that way, many other people agree.

This is true, and crucial to keep in mind. It's probably the best way to say things. Categories not only turn us into groups, but obscure the more important issue, namely: how are we going to have a transportation system that works for all people? Point taken. Zasloff, J., concurring.

But I still want a word, dammit. So I will go with our friend Leon Dayan's suggestion: *scooterista*. It has the continental elan that Julia demands. I will use it. And then I will take Will's advice and focus on "people using scooters."