

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: April 9, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL DEPLOYMENT AND OPERATION OF SERVE ROBOTICS' AI-POWERED SIDEWALK DELIVERY ROBOTS IN THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Administration is in support of the operation of the Serve Robots, Inc. in Miami Beach via a pilot program, contingent upon entering into an agreement between the City and Serve Robotics, Inc. (similar to Citi Bike), based on the City's needs and regulations, including insurance that would protect the City from liability.

### **BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

On February 3, 2025, at the request of Commissioner Laura Dominguez, the Mayor and City Commission (City Commission) approved item C4F (Attachment A), a referral to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC) to discuss the potential deployment and operation of Serve Robotics' AI-powered sidewalk delivery robots in Miami Beach.

Serve Robotics, Inc. ("Serve") develops advanced, AI-powered, low-emission sidewalk delivery robots that endeavor to make deliveries sustainable, reliable, and economical. Spun off from Uber in 2021 as an independent company, Serve has completed tens of thousands of deliveries (in cities including West Hollywood, Los Angeles, and San Francisco) for enterprise partners such as Uber Eats and 7-Eleven. These sidewalk delivery robots have also made their way to Miami Dade County. Commissioner Dominguez would like to discuss the feasibility of having robots operate in Miami Beach.

### **ANALYSIS**

The City reached out to Serve to gather more data on these sidewalk delivery robots and how they would work out in the City. Serve robots are currently operating in Miami Beach, delivering through the Uber Eats application. There are about 20-25 robots currently operating in "hot spot" areas (areas with highest demand for Uber Eats orders). Not everyone will get their food delivered via these robots, since there is a limited number of units, however this is expected to change in the near future. It is estimated that by June of this year, there will be about 50 robots operating in Miami Beach, and possibly more in the future, as demand increases (more robots are currently being built).

#### **Gen3 Model Specifications (model currently being used in the City):**

**Speed:** Average speed of 3 miles per hour when driving through sidewalks and about 5-6 miles per hour when crossing the streets.

**Weather:** Can drive through moderate rain (will stop in heavy weather)

**Radius:** 1.5 miles (as a way to keep food orders warm)

**Cargo:** 15 gal, or 4x16" size pizzas

**Delivery:** It can only be opened by a customer or the merchant via a unique passcode.

**Navigation:** Serve robots use a range of sensors to identify the objects around them and to avoid obstacles

**Maintenance:** Robots are taken once a day to a container (trailer) to have them charged, cleaned up, and data download.

Due to its speed, these robots can only operate on sidewalks, on their own in self-driving mode, and supervised by remote pilots. Each robot is covered by Serve's insurance policy.

Should Serve and the City agree to collaborate, a contract would need to be drafted and agreed upon (similar to Citi Bike), based on the City's needs and regulations, including insurance that would protect the City from liability.

A potential pilot may be considered, including the City facilitating a permanent parking spot, where they can operate to and from. A suggested lot is Parking Lot P27, located on Meridian Avenue and Lincoln Lane North, next to Cafecito. Should this be the case, the contract agreement between the City and Serve would include an option of revenue sharing, to compensate for loss of space to park these devices. Should the agreement between the City and Serve include a revenue share option, Serve would not need to pay a daily parking fee to use the lot.

These robots are not considered micromobility, as they do not transport people. Since there are currently about 25 units, it would not require an immediate traffic study, however, as the number of operating robots increase, and selected areas of operation expand, a study may be required. It will require a Business Tax Receipt depending on where the Serve's office is located, and City Commission approval should the threshold of the pilot exceed \$100,000, as well as a bid waiver should Serve be considered as the sole vendor. A contract would need to be drafted and agreed upon prior the start of the pilot.

On March 12, 2025, PSNQLC members discussed the proposed the potential pilot program. PSNQLC members made a motion to continue the discussion to the following month, and to provide feedback from Police, and potential concerns, since these robots (due to their limited speed) could only operate on sidewalks.

The following comments were received from the Police Department:

- In 2017 the State of Florida passed a law (amended in 2021) limiting the speed of these structures to 10 mph (Serve robots would fall within the range).
- The main concern with the robots is how to regulate them, oversee its enforcement, and minimum liability provisions.
- These robots could also represent a potential of street and road blockage due to its inability to overcome cracked sidewalks or obstructions like overgrown trees. Concerns have also been raised about mitigating and sharing the road with accessibility needs.
- Lastly, vandalism. While Serve robots may be equipped with sirens and surveillance which detects activity and improper conduct immediately; however, police would have to take investigative steps to identify and locate suspects.

With regards to Miami Beach, if fully embraced by the restaurants, Serve robots could reduce delivery vehicle traffic as shown by other cities and have positive environmental impacts for the same reason.

## **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

To be determined.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Administration is in support of the operation of the Serve Robots, Inc. in Miami Beach via a pilot program, contingent upon entering an agreement between the City and Serve Robotics, Inc.

(similar to Citi Bike), based on the City's needs and regulations, including insurance that would protect the City from liability.

**Applicable Area**

South Beach

<b><u>Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?</u></b>	<b><u>Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?</u></b>
Yes	No

**Department**

Public Works

**Sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Laura Dominguez

**Condensed Title**

DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL DEPLOYMENT AND OPERATION OF SERVE ROBOTICS' AI-POWERED SIDEWALK DELIVERY ROBOTS IN THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH