

Austria authorises hoverboards... even if they don't exist yet

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Hoverboards may have yet to make the leap from the "Back to the Future" movies to reality, but Austria's transport ministry has given them the green light anyway.

A ministry announcement on Tuesday—a day before the day on which the plot of 1989's "Back to the Future II" unfolds, October 21, 2015—said hoverboards could be treated as "small off-road vehicles" that could be used "anywhere a skateboard is".

The ministry added that it wanted to provide users with "legal clarity" over the matter.

The only general restriction, as for skateboards, is that users must not "endanger passers-by or motor traffic".

But the ministry said more restrictive regulations would be needed for the Pit Bull hoverboard model featured in Back to the Future, which was powered by rockets.

Use of this model would require a pilot's certificate and flight authorisation, and a nautical permit if it was to be used on water.

Long a fantasy for teenagers and engineers alike, hoverboards have yet to become commercially available.

Several firms have produced prototypes, including California-based

technology company Hendo, which is building a hoverboard that works on magnetic repulsion.

Shoemaker Nike is meanwhile working on sneakers with self-tightening "power laces" like the ones Marty McFly wears in "Back to the Future".

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