



The wooden scooter is designed to be mainly used indoors | Photo source [Mikiya Kobayashi](#)

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WOODEN SCOOTER LENDS A WARMER FEEL TO MOBILITY

● MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

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Spotted: Japanese designer Mikiya Kobayashi looks for uniqueness in minimal shapes and natural materials. He has recently created an electric scooter, dubbed ILY-Ai, the body of which is sculpted from wood. The scooter was developed in collaboration with automotive company Aisin Seiki and wood furniture manufacturer Karimoku.

The moped is fully electric, but the components are hidden behind the front panel and wheels, giving the impression the rider is sitting on a wooden chair. Kobayashi chose chestnut for the wood, due to its lightness and water resistance. The scooter also has a curved, undulating shape that emphasises the notion of comfort.

The name ILY-Ai is an acronym for “Innovative Lifestyle for You”, “Active” and “Intelligent”. While the scooter can be ridden by anyone, it is particularly geared towards the elderly and those with mobility issues. With a speed of just four kilometres an hour, it is intended to be used in indoor spaces such as shopping centres and event halls. It also features an integrated safety sensor that brings it to a stop if it gets too close to any obstacles.

While mobility scooters are usually made from metal, which can give a harsh appearance, [Kobayashi wants](#) the ILY-Ai to have a “warm and friendly” feeling. He has said that wood was chosen for its positive psychological, emotional and stress-relieving effects, as well as its pleasing scent. According to his website, Kobayashi “has always closely related to his cultural heritage, connecting tradition with new concepts, manufacturing processes and technologies.”

The need to make mobility easier and more sustainable is growing in importance and urgency. At Springwise, we have seen this trend in a growing number of innovations aimed at improving transport options, particularly for the elderly. These have included an [e-bike](#) that increases stability, so it is easier to use for seniors and an e-bike that alerts riders to [blind spots](#).

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Takeaway:

Portable mobility scooters have been gaining in popularity around the world, particularly in places with an ageing population and as an alternative to wheelchairs. However, the devices tend to be ugly and so can be associated with negative connotations. The ILY-Ai tries to change that, with a warmer, friendlier scooter that blends into its environment. The scooter is only a concept model for now, and a commercial model may well need to add additional features, such as a backrest, to make it practical.