



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 14, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Micro-Mobility - E-Scooters (PED19099) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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INFORMATION

In the past few years, there has been an emergence of several new technologies aimed at providing options for first mile and last mile connections and short trips. These include bike share (e.g. Sobi), small one or two-person electric cars, and the newest trend – e-scooters.

Commonly referred to as “micro-mobility”, these new technologies will increase mobility choices for the citizens of Hamilton. However, there is also a risk that they could be perceived as a nuisance, and potentially create public safety concerns if not properly regulated. This report provides an overview of micro-mobility trends that may have an impact within the City of Hamilton. The primary focus is on e-scooters as they may pose the most concern for municipalities in terms of safety and required changes to by-laws and traffic regulations.

E-scooters represent a new way for residents to move around their communities. E-scooters are electronic powered, two-wheel standing vehicles designed for a single rider. These e-scooters are parked using a kickstand and usually have lights, sensors

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and personal identification that activates the e-scooter by using an app on a smart phone.

Given their convenience for short trips, they have the potential to increase access to transit stops, replace short car trips in busy retail areas, and generally reduce dependence on single occupant vehicles. Because they are powered by batteries, they also have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and noise impacts, as compared to regular gasoline vehicles. A detailed overview of e-scooters was recently prepared by the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and is attached as Appendix “A” to this Report. The overview summarizes the opportunities, challenges and current state of legislation and policy related to e-scooters.

The prevalence of e-scooters has increased dramatically over the past two years. E-scooter companies, such as Lime and Bird, have placed e-scooters in over 100 cities worldwide. E-scooters are currently in operation in several major cities in the United States (US) as well as several European Countries. Within Ontario, the City of Waterloo is piloting e-scooters along the Laurel Trail and currently examining expanding the pilot to include the University of Waterloo in 2019.

Most e-scooters providers are operating with the approval and cooperation of the municipality; however, there are examples of companies launching start-ups in municipalities without approval. Companies who do not work with the municipality tend to opt for the model of ‘disrupt first and apologize later’. In these situations, e-scooters are often set up overnight with no regulations or by-laws in place. Several cities have now either banned or impounded these e-scooters. One of the main reasons that e-scooters are being impounded is because they are left in unsafe locations, blocking sidewalks or wheelchair accessible ramps, laying on the sidewalk or leaning against fire hydrants. Conversely, larger more established companies do not employ this strategy and work closely with municipalities to ensure mutual benefit.

With respect to safety, e-scooters have raised concerns as most do not come with helmets or require special training for operation. Several people have been seriously injured while driving e-scooters with at least three fatalities being reported in the US. A law suit was filed in California after several people were injured from tripping over e-scooters discarded on sidewalks or because the e-scooter operators have run into pedestrians from behind.

In Ontario, operating e-scooters on sidewalks or roadways is currently against the law. They can only be operated on private property if permitted by owners. However, given their inevitable introduction, new policies and regulations will be required at both the provincial and municipal level. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is currently in consultation with the e-scooter providers to examine if this new mode of transportation will be allowed on roadways and what restrictions, if any, will be considered.

One potential impact on municipalities may be an increased need to enforce e-scooter operators who are breaking the rules. For example, regulations may be required to ensure riders do not park e-scooters such that they block access to sidewalks, entrances or impede the safety of others.

Several US cities have implemented by-laws that give Municipal Law Enforcement Officers the ability to retrieve and impound the e-scooters from around the city. Some cities have licensed the e-scooter businesses, while others have created permits for each e-scooter so they can be parked on sidewalks. Where an established policy regime exists, and there is a strong partnership between the municipality and the e-scooter operator, there is a higher potential to achieve greater compliance of rules to ensure the pedestrian zone of the right of way is not impeded by improperly parked e-scooters.

As part of preparing for e-scooters in the City of Hamilton, staff met with the operator of Lime. Lime reported that many of the initial concerns about nuisances have not materialized in other cities where they have launched services. Many of the concerns identified previously have been effectively dealt with by the business model and technology. Strategies used by Lime, and other major operators, include:

- Re-balancing of the e-scooter fleet;
- Geo-fencing to restrict parking outside of suitable areas;
- Education for riders;
- End of trip policies to ensure e-scooters are parked correctly;
- An alert system and mobile response if the e-scooter is not left upright; and,
- Creation of a Local Operational Team that responds to any concerns.

As evidence that e-scooter behaviour can be managed, data from Lime shows that 72% of all e-scooters were parked correctly on sidewalks with most of the others (23%) parked off the streetscape on adjacent properties. Of the e-scooters parked on sidewalks, 90% did not disrupt pedestrian flow. Virtually all e-scooters were parked upright. Lime also encourages riders to wear helmets, have riders pledge to adhere to safe and responsible riding and have on-the-ground safety ambassadors dedicated to educating local communities about e-scooter safety.

Reputable e-scooter companies are willing to work with a municipality to ensure the e-scooters are placed in the most appropriate locations to ensure access, but not impact sidewalks or pedestrian flow.

Although there are still several regulatory changes that are required at the provincial level before e-scooters can be fully deployed, it is prudent that the City of Hamilton start to prepare for their introduction. While monitoring pending changes to the Highway Traffic Act (HTA), staff will continue to evaluate options to ensure some municipal control over these new modes, either through licensing or by contracting out to an

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appropriate operator with specific guidelines. The latter approach would be similar to what was done with SoBi Hamilton for the introduction of bike share.

Staff will continue to report back to Council with respect to any potential introductions of e-scooters in Hamilton, as well as options for appropriately regulating and integrating them into the City as part of our multi-modal transportation system.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” - Draft Briefing Notes: E-Scooters in Ontario

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