

Report to Council



Date: June 19th, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Micromobility Permit Program Update
Department: Integrated Transportation

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Integrated Transportation, dated June 19th, 2023, with regards to the Micromobility Permit Program.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an update on the Micromobility Permit Program.

Background:

Kelowna is one of eight communities participating in the provincial e-scooter pilot. Council amended the Traffic Bylaw in April 2021 to allow e-scooters to be ridden on city streets under the same rules as bicycles.

Shared e-scooters and e-bikes are regulated through the City's Micromobility Permit. After a challenging rollout, numerous changes were made throughout 2021 in response to community input. These included limiting the number of e-scooters, suspending late-night service downtown, requiring sidewalk riding detection, and adding shared helmets, among others. A summary of changes was [presented to Council](#) in November 2021.

In April 2022, the City issued permits for two companies: Lime and Spin. Each company was allowed to deploy 350 e-scooters and 150 e-bikes for a total of 1,000 vehicles. The permit's term is two years, coinciding with the end of the provincial pilot in April 2024.

Spin left the Canadian market in October 2022. Lime will be the sole operator with a fleet cap of 1,000 vehicles until its permit expires in April 2024.

Discussion:

The intent of this report is to provide Council with a mid-cycle update on key performance measures for the Micromobility Permit Program, including ridership, parking compliance, complaints, and safety. Staff are preparing a more comprehensive evaluation for Council in the fall.

If the Province and Kelowna City Council decide to continue the e-scooter pilot beyond April 2024, staff will begin a competitive selection process for new permits. Preparation of the new procurement process could commence in December 2023.

Ridership

Over 600,000 trips have been made on shared e-scooters and e-bikes to date. Ridership in 2023 is approximately four times higher (year-over-year) than in 2022. Usage has also grown faster midweek (up five times year-over-year) and in Rutland (up six times). Rider surveys indicate that 70 per cent of users are Central Okanagan residents.

The average trip length is just under two kilometres or 10 minutes. Micromobility provides a sustainable option for trips that are too far to walk but too short for transit or ride-hailing to be competitive.

One issue with the rollout in 2021 was the overcrowding of e-scooters downtown. The permit now limits the number of e-scooters downtown to 200. This ensures broader availability across the city. Since 2021, the service area has expanded to cover 70 per cent of residents. Currently, 60 per cent of trips happen outside of downtown.

Environmental Impact

Shared e-scooters and e-bikes are reducing congestion and emissions by providing an alternative to driving in the summer when pressure on the road network is highest. Rider surveys indicate that 48 per cent of e-scooter trips replace driving. This is similar to results from Vernon (40 per cent) and the broader North American average (37 per cent).

Waterfront Pathway Restriction

Location tracking in shared e-scooters and e-bikes allows the City to "geofence" slow speed, no-parking, and no-riding areas. In June 2021, Council passed a resolution prohibiting shared e-scooters on the Waterfront multi-use pathway. Shared e-scooters lose all power and users cannot end their trips in this zone. Tracking data shows approximately 406 trips on the pathway near Stuart Park this year (0.3 per cent of overall trips). Staff reviewed a sample using security footage from the park and confirmed that users were manually pushing the e-scooters in the cases.

Parking

The Micromobility Permit includes several tools for managing parking. Riders must take a photo of how they parked and receive a discount for using designated parking spaces. Lime reviews these photos and issued 325 warnings and fines for improper riding or parking in April and May 2023.

Staff also conduct random parking audits to ensure compliance with the 97 per cent standard in the permit.

Service Requests

Staff are monitoring feedback from the community through various channels. The volume of service requests decreased by 90 per cent from 2021 to 2022. So far in 2023, the City has received 24 service requests or approximately 1 request per 5,000 trips.

Safety

The City is collaborating with Interior Health to monitor emergency room visits related to e-scooters. Between April 2021 and September 2022, 110 injuries were identified out of 453,000 trips. After a spike

in the first 40 days, the injury rate for e-scooters was similar to the estimated rate for bicycles. There was a 30 per cent reduction in confirmed e-scooter injuries in 2022 compared to 2021. Interior Health data includes private and shared e-scooter injuries.

Education

Riders are provided with safety information and requirements through multiple channels, including in-app messages and rules printed on the vehicles. E-scooters are also required to have sidewalk detection technology and deliver audible warnings to riders.

In addition, education campaigns deliver key safety messages to the community (e.g. intoxicated riding, underage riders, sidewalk riding, helmets, and improper parking). The E-Scooter Safety Education Campaign launched in May with outdoor advertising, print, radio, and social media and will continue throughout the riding season.

In 2023, Lime will also be deploying street teams downtown to educate riders on safe and courteous riding and parking during the busy summer months.

Cost

The Micromobility Permit Program is self-funding. The City does not receive any revenue from riders; however, operators pay an annual permit fee to offset costs related to managing the City tasks associated with the program (e.g. staff time, materials, and community education). The value proposition for the City is that micromobility helps reduce congestion and emissions with no impact on taxation.

Conclusion:

Micromobility is becoming an everyday transportation option in Kelowna. Usage continues to increase and the majority of users are Kelowna residents. The downtown remains the most common ride area however a significant amount of trips are happening across the city. Shared e-bikes and e-scooters are reducing congestion and emissions by giving residents and visitors an alternative to driving for short trips.

Staff will continue to monitor the program and look for opportunities to make improvements. A complete program evaluation will be brought to Council in the fall.

If the Province and Kelowna Council decide to continue the e-scooter pilot beyond April 2024, staff will begin a competitive selection process for new permits in December 2023.

Internal Circulation:

Communications

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

Imagine Kelowna

Goal – Embrace diverse transportation options to shift away from a car-centric culture

Making it easy for people to choose non-driving options protects the beauty of Kelowna and makes getting around more enjoyable

2040 Official Community Plan:

Objective 4.20: *Adapt and respond to emerging transportation technologies*

Policy 4.20.1 – Shared Mobility Programs: *Continue to support pilot programs and partnerships to improve access to emerging on-demand mobility options that reduce greenhouse gases and enhance sustainable transportation options.*

Policy 4.20.2 – Emerging Transportation Technology: *Work with other levels of government and industry to leverage potential of emerging transportation technologies, such as self-driving or ride-hailing for example, to reduce congestion and greenhouse gases while supporting the transition away from a car centric culture.*

2040 Transportation Master Plan:

Policy 7.5: *Continue to expand and refine the Micromobility Permit Program. Look for ways to offer more types of vehicles, cover more neighbourhoods and provide more equitable access to service.*

Policy 7.6: *Structure shared mobility policy and programs to offer more equitable service for low-income or unbanked residents, people with limited access to technology, and people with disabilities.*

Council Priorities 2023 – 2026:

The results we want to see:

More trips by alternative transportation modes

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

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Approved for inclusion: Malcolm Logan, Infrastructure General Manager

Attachments: Micromobility Permit Program Update