BEAUMONT

COUNCIL REPORT

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
September 10, 2024

E-Scooter Pilot Program Feasibility Report

RECOMMENDATION THAT Administration proceed with the pilot program next steps, as set out in the September 10, 2024 report, to implement a 2-year e-scooter pilot program with an anticipated start date of summer 2025.		
REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION	Decision required	
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT – BUILDING OUR TOMORROW, TODAY	An economically prosperous and financially sustainable community to last generations. Future-proof growth for a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community. Select an option	
COUNCIL BYLAW, POLICY, MASTER PLAN	Transportation Master Plan, *Our Connectivity*	
COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE HISTORY	February 13, 2024	THAT by the end of the second quarter of 2024, Administration prepare a feasibility report on conducting an e-scooter pilot program in Beaumont similar to the program established in the City of Leduc, and that the report include information on costs, liability, required legislative changes, public engagement approaches, as well as any opportunities to partner with the City of Leduc on an existing program.

Report

E-scooters have been gaining popularity in Alberta, with large centres like Edmonton and Calgary first introducing them in 2019. More recently, communities such as Airdrie, Leduc, Okotoks, Red Deer, and St. Albert have implemented permanent e-scooter programs, while other communities such as Spruce Grove and Cochrane are in the midst of multi-year pilot programs. A recent report from the City of Edmonton noted that the number of e-scooter rides increased by 124% from 2022 to 2023, suggesting a growing demand for micromobility choices within the region.

At the February 13, 2024, Council meeting, Administration was asked to prepare a feasibility report on conducting an e-scooter pilot program in Beaumont. This report provides background information on the various considerations for a potential e-scooter pilot program. As a result of research, Administration recommends that a 2-year e-scooter pilot program be undertaken with an anticipated start date of Summer 2025.

Submitted by: Trevor Moningka, Long Range Engineer
Approved by: Maureen O'Neil, Deputy CAO, External Services

Objectives of an E-Scooter Pilot Program

An e-scooter pilot program can be useful to assess the feasibility, safety, and benefits of integrating electric scooters into the existing transportation system. The primary aim of such a program is to provide an alternative, environmentally friendly mode of transportation that can alleviate traffic congestion, reduce carbon emissions, and cater to short distance travel needs within the city. The pilot program can also be used to evaluate the infrastructure requirements, regulatory framework, and public acceptance of e-scooters. Data collected during the pilot phase, such as usage patterns, accident rates, and user feedback, are crucial in shaping future policies and regulations surrounding e-scooter usage.

E-scooters provide a convenient and accessible mode of transportation for short-distance travel, improving choices in micromobility for residents. They can provide a last-mile solution, complementing transit and helping users to reach their destination more efficiently. E-scooters produce zero-emissions during operation, contributing to improved air quality and reduced carbon footprint, and may reduce traffic congestion if trips are replacing vehicle trips, especially at peak hours. Finally, there can be economic benefits, in the form of new jobs related to e-scooter maintenance and operations.

City of Leduc's Pilot Program

In alignment with the Council motion, Administration consulted with the City of Leduc regarding their program. Leduc's pilot, which ran for two years from 2022 to 2023, yielded overall positive results. This success has paved the way for a formal, permanent program that started in 2024. The pilot program was used to evaluate the benefits and challenges of implementing an e-scooter program, and to solicit feedback from residents on the program details. The objective of both the pilot and permanent programs is twofold:

- to serve as a last mile option for transit users; and
- to provide a recreational opportunity.

The program provider was responsible for equipping, distributing, charging, and maintaining the scooters, all of which were fitted with a bell and light. The City was able to limit the area of operation for e-scooters through geofencing, preventing their operation in undesirable areas, such as outside of multi-use pathways through parks. The cost structure for using an e-scooter included an unlock fee of approximately $2.50, followed by a charge of $0.25 per minute, with no daily maximum. To prevent clutter, a cap was placed on the total number of scooters, with Leduc's cap ranging between 50 and 150 scooters over the course of the pilot. Usage of the scooters was restricted to individuals aged 16 and above, and double riding was not permitted. The speed of e-scooters was capped at 20 km/h to maintain a balance between safety and effective mobility. No infrastructure upgrades or modifications were made to support the e-scooter program.

The initiation of the program required some City resources, including procurement of a vendor, legal and legislative work for reviewing RFP, contracts, bylaw amendments, and communications for public engagement and feedback. The program was revenue neutral for the City. The pilot program contract included the provision of $5M liability insurance with the City identified as an additional insured party. The City of Leduc was also required to update their Parkland and Traffic Bylaws to regulate the operation of e-scooters.

Before the pilot was launched, Leduc engaged with residents to gauge their opinion on introducing e-scooters in the City. This involved conducting an online survey and an open house. Surveys were also conducted at the conclusion of each year of the pilot program.

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During the first year of the pilot program, the speed limit for e-scooters was set at 15 km/h. However, the City received feedback from users that indicated this was too slow, and the City adjusted the speed limit to 20 km/h in the second year of the pilot. Additional feedback received was focused on sidewalk congestion, clutter or other hazards related to improper parking of e-scooters. To address this issue, the City imposed a cap on the number of scooters, limiting it to 100 during the second year.

Another point of contention was the cost of using the e-scooters, which some users found to be too high. The costs are determined by the provider, and to keep these costs at a minimum, Leduc did not include a surcharge to be remitted to the City.

In terms of usage, survey results showed that e-scooter ridership was fairly evenly distributed among different age groups, with about two-thirds of the riders being male.

Legislative Review

Alberta Provincial Traffic Safety Act

The use of e-scooters on roadways and sidewalks in Alberta is governed by the provincial Traffic Safety Act. E-scooters are considered motor vehicles under the Traffic Safety Act, and also meet the definition of miniature vehicles. However, they do not meet the criteria to be classified as either a mobility aid, motorcycle, or pedestrian.

Miniature vehicles, including e-scooters, are not permitted on highways in Alberta, including sidewalks alongside the roadway. The definition of "highway" includes privately owned places that the public is ordinarily entitled or permitted to use for the passage or parking of vehicles, for example shopping mall parking lots. Prohibited miniature vehicles also include personal transporter, pocket bikes, go carts, and golf carts, and vehicles in this class may not be registered as a motor vehicle. The operators of these vehicles, even though they may be used in a pedestrian-like manner, also do not meet the legal definition of "pedestrian".

Miniature vehicles may only be operated on private property. The sole exception to this is by a granted special permit granting authority to operate on a highway. This type of permit has been granted to e-scooter providers to operate their fleets of e-scooters on public roadways within the province.

It should be noted that Alberta Municipalities adopted a resolution in 2023 to advocate to the provincial government to amend the Traffic Safety Act to accommodate the daily use of e-scooters throughout the province, for both rental and personal use.

Beaumont Traffic Safety Bylaw

The City's updated Traffic Safety Bylaw came into effect on June 1, 2024. The bylaw prohibits any type of vehicle, other than a mobility aid, from being parked on the sidewalk or boulevard, or any part thereof. The bylaw also states that vehicles or off-highway vehicles may not be operated or parked within City parkland or other recreational facilities.

The bylaw also specifically addresses operation of vehicles including scooters and similar vehicles and prohibits their operation at an unreasonable rate of speed based on road condition and pedestrian traffic. It also prohibits operation on any Highway where a traffic control device indicates the restriction. Finally, off-highway vehicles are not permitted to be operated anywhere within the City except for loading and unloading, and miniature vehicles can only be operated on private property.

The bylaw would need to be updated to specifically allow for use of e-scooters from the

designated provider to be operated in permitted locations consistent with the program. This may include shared-use pathways and non-arterial roadways. The bylaw may also set out the maximum speed that e-scooters may be operated at, consistent with the program limits. Finally, the bylaw may also need to be updated to set out designated parking areas and to allow for enforcement of and penalties for illegal parking of e-scooters.

Beaumont Parks and Facilities Bylaw

The City's Parks and Facilities Bylaw prohibits the use of a Motor Vehicle in a park, except on a public roadway, and the use of an Off-Highway vehicle in a park. Off-Highway vehicles are defined to include any motorized form of transportation, including miniature motor vehicles. Under the bylaw, e-scooters would not be permitted within City parks, either on roadways, shared use pathways, or other green space.

To facilitate an e-scooter pilot program, the bylaw would need to be updated to permit use of e-scooters from the designated provider within the desired areas of City parks. This may only include shared use pathways and prohibit use and parking of e-scooters on green space to avoid conflicts with park maintenance activities.

Enforcement

Due to limited resources, enforcement of the e-scooter program rules can be challenging. It is preferable to transfer responsibility of enforcement issues such as illegal parking to the vendor(s). Another complementary approach is to emphasize education and awareness of the regulations pertaining to e-scooter use. It is important to work with the vendor(s) to promote safe and responsible use and to discourage irresponsible and disruptive behaviour such as riding on sidewalks and parking in a manner that obstructs pedestrians. There are many tools that can be used, including in-app tutorials, stickers or signage on the e-scooters, emails, and social media advertising.

Liability

The City's legal counsel has recommended that the City should transfer all responsibility for managing, operating and maintaining the e-scooters to the vendor(s) if a pilot program is implemented. The program communication and design should be clear that the vendor is responsible for the actual day-to-day use and operation of e-scooters. The vendor would be required to have adequate commercial and general liability insurance and include indemnities for the City. An operating agreement between the City and the vendor(s) would outline these items and other specific terms.

Users accessing the program through the mobile application (app), would be required to accept a user agreement and acknowledge a disclaimer each time they use an e-scooter. The terms for acceptance should include, at a minimum, compliance with the applicable laws, safe operation of the e-scooter, and an age limit of 16+. If desired, this acknowledgement could also include a reminder on parking rules, etiquette, and penalties.

Next Steps

A pilot program is an excellent way to test the feasibility and impacts of an e-scooter program. The program would be a useful way to gather data and solicit feedback that can inform the program rules, bylaw changes and level of enforcement needed. It is anticipated that a pilot program could be in place before Summer 2025. The length of the pilot program may vary, but a minimum of 2 years is recommended to allow for sufficient time to receive and incorporate feedback into the program, prior to deciding whether to transition to a permanent program.

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Approved by: Maureen O'Neil, Deputy CAO, External Services

To permit an e-scooter program, the City's Traffic Safety Bylaw will need to be updated to specifically allow for the defined use of e-scooters by an approved vendor in designated locations. Further changes may be required to identify allowable parking areas and enable enforcement of illegal parking. The City's Parks and Facilities Bylaw also needs to be updated to permit the use of e-scooters within City parks, such as multi-use pathways and could prohibit use and parking on green spaces as well as speed, to avoid conflicts with other users and park maintenance needs.

If Council wishes to undertake and implement a 2-year e-scooter Pilot program, the next step would be to develop a program and procure a vendor(s) with an anticipated start date Summer 2025. Administration would bring a detailed proposal for the pilot program, including recommendations on operational parameters, geographic restrictions, and required bylaw amendments to Council before the end of Q1 2025 for feedback and approval prior to implementing the pilot program.

Financial Analysis

It is expected that an e-scooter pilot program in Beaumont would not have any direct costs for the City. However, the program would require the use of City resources to initiate the program, including for procurement, legal and legislative work for reviewing proposals, contracts and bylaw amendments, and public engagement and feedback. Some ongoing resources may be required for enforcement of the program rules and related bylaws, depending on the desired approach. Once the program is in operation, some City resources would also be needed to administer the program and address emerging issues and is estimated in the range of 5-10 hours of staff time per week. It is possible that the City include a surcharge in the fees to help cover these costs, but it is expected that any such surcharge would be passed on directly to users.

Leduc advised that it may not be feasible or effective to partner with the City of Beaumont on this program due to the difference in program phases between the municipalities, and challenges with joint procurement of vendors.

Risk Analysis

To address any legal liability issues, the operating agreement with the e-scooter vendor(s) would include indemnification of the City and the requirement for the vendor to hold adequate commercial and general liability insurance. Users would access the service through a mobile app, which will require acceptance of a user agreement and disclaimer. The terms of the agreement should include, at a minimum, that the user will comply with applicable laws, operate the e-scooter in a safe and responsible manner, and meet the minimum age requirement.

Community Insight

Public engagement will be an important component of the e-scooter pilot program. It is anticipated that the focus of engagement will be to identify concerns and inform the framework of the pilot program. Additional feedback collected during the pilot program may be used to further adjust the program. The engagement strategy would include an initial public open house, online survey platform, and follow up surveys during the pilot program.

Attachments

N/A

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