

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Transport**

18 January 2021

Report of the Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment

Update on the E-scooter trials

Summary

1. This paper provides an update on the progress of the e-scooter trials in York, and sets out a proposal to further expand the service area, and add e-bikes to the rental scheme in Q1 of 2021.

Recommendation

2. The recommendations in this report relate to the City of York council's participation in the Department for Transport's micro-mobility trial. The decision relates to expanding the service area, and adding e-bikes to the vehicle mix;

Option 1: To expand the service area that e-scooters can be hired and used, including a phased increase in e-scooters up to 700. Introduce e-bikes as outlined in the body of the report. This would see implementation of e-bikes across the city using the same parking bays as currently used for e-scooters. The e-bikes would look to be introduced in Q1 of 2021 [this is the option recommended by Officers];

Option 2: To expand the service area across the authority area, including a phased increase in e-scooters up to 700. To limit the trial to e-scooters and not add e-bikes.

3. If the addition of e-bikes are approved, then it is proposed that these will be introduced in Q1 of 2021.

Background

4. The decision for York to participate in the Department for Transport's (DfT) e-scooter trials was made on the 8th September 2020. These trials support a 'green' restart of local travel and help mitigate the impact of reduced public transport capacity, providing a sustainable mode of transport around the city.
5. As part of the decision for York to participate, it was agreed that e-bikes would be considered as part of the vehicle mix following review of the progress of the trial with e-scooters.
6. The trial with e-scooters has seen high usage across the current service area of the city. The addition of e-bikes would increase travel options for users and would coincide with the increase in the service area.

Update on the trials

7. The trial of e-scooters has been operating since the 12th October. The e-scooters are being introduced in a phased approach, gradually increasing the service area and number of e-scooters available. This has split the city broadly into 5 sectors. Currently e-scooters are available in Sector 1 and 2, which includes e-scooter provision at the University of York, York Hospital, York St John's University, and city centre locations. In the first six weeks of the trial, 10 parking locations were available for scooters with 116 e-scooters available for hire.
8. The approach taken to provide and only allow e-scooters to be parked in dedicated bays has mitigated incidence of e-scooters being seen as street clutter and improved safety for non-users. The approach taken has also led to high parking compliance, with this consistently over 99% in the first 6 weeks of the trial.
9. Over the first six weeks of the trial, 3,822 trips were taken, with a total of 25,012km travelled on e-scooters. During this period, no incidences were reported. An incident is defined as that which involves personal injury occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle (including bikes and e-scooters) or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved. This is similar to experiences in other trial areas in England, where only a few incidents have been reported to date.
10. TIER have undertaken a number of measures to ensure a COVID-safe service. TIER have increased their cleaning regime, with scooters

cleaned daily, averaging a clean every 5 rides or less. Hair nets and sanitiser sachets are also available in the helmet box provided with every scooter. Further information on TIER's COVID measures can be found at the following webpage - <https://www.tier.app/covid19/>.

11. TIER have supported key workers during COVID. TIER scooters are available at York Hospital and during the second national lockdown in November, TIER launched their TIER Heroes programme in York. This programme offered key frontline workers, including those in the NHS, free unlocks and minutes for the e-scooters to assist their daily commutes.
12. Ongoing engagement with the key City partners including the Universities, North Yorkshire Police and the Hospital, has ensured effective communication of progress of the scheme and resolving any issues quickly. The council are also in regular contact with the Department for Transport and other participating local authorities to share updates on the trial and address any issues.
13. TIER have engaged with residents in the city, holding a virtual community event for York, informing residents on TIER and the e-scooter trials, and have launched a blog to provide regular updates on the service area and parking locations. Links to TIER's blog and how to report any issues are available on iTravel - <https://www.itravelyork.info/e-scooter-trial>.
14. Other local authority areas participating in the trial have noted an increase in use of private e-scooters which remain illegal to ride on the public highway. Whilst their use has not been as prevalent in York, as the trial continues we may see a similar increase in use of private e-scooters. TIER and North Yorkshire Police are taking proactive measures, engaging and learning from other local police in participating trial areas, to address this issue.

How would the e-bikes work?

15. The rental of e-bikes would follow the same model as for e-scooters, with riders unlocking and paying for usage via a mobile phone app (see paper to this decision session on 8th September 2020).
16. In line with government regulation, the maximum speed-assist of the e-bikes would be 15.5mph, with the power not exceeding 250 watts.

17. E-bikes would be available for short-term hire and to pick-up and return using the same designated parking bays as e-scooters. Similar to the e-scooters, the TIER e-bikes are equipped with a double kickstand when parked to increase their stability.
18. Geo-fencing technology would be used to ensure a user cannot end their trip outside of designated parking locations and will continue the hire cost if left outside of these locations.
19. Currently geo-fencing technology can be used to limit the service area and speed of e-scooters by cutting the motor and reducing the speed to 0mph. However the technology is unable to have the same limitations on speed and service area of e-bikes as the rider can still move the bike by pedalling. The pedal-assist on the e-bikes will stop if the e-bike leaves the service area, though a rider will still be able to move by pedalling the bike.
20. Pricing for e-bikes would be at the same cost as e-scooters, with £1 to unlock and £0.15 per minute to ride. There are also options to reduce price for frequent users or other identified groups.

Discussion

21. The e-scooter trial has seen good usage across the city. The approach taken on providing and only allowing for parking in dedicated bays has mitigated incidence of e-scooters being seen as street clutter and improved safety for non-users.
22. The council have worked positively with TIER and other key city stakeholders, including the Hospital and both Universities to respond to issues in a timely manner.
23. The council have worked with TIER in phasing the introduction of parking bays and service area of the e-scooters. This phased introduction of e-scooters has enabled any issues to be resolved quickly, and informed the future approach of expanding the service area and adding parking bays.
24. This phased approach would be applied if an increase in the service area and number of e-scooters is approved. This expansion would broadly follow the below timelines and areas of the city:
 - Sector 3 to include Clifton and Rawcliffe in January;
 - Sector 4 to include Southbank and Heworth in February;

- Sector 5 to expand to the rest of the city from March 2021.

25. To support the roll out of e-scooters through COVID and recovery, the council will work with TIER to investigate the possibility of installing some virtual parking bays. These offer the opportunity for faster rollout of e-scooters to enable use across more of the city, as well as greater flexibility for moving or removing parking bays as required.
26. Expanding the trial area to include most areas within the outer ring road offers a number of benefits to York. For those using the service, this will increase connectivity of the city for riders, linking the city centre with key services and residential areas. Increasing the area available to ride and ease of hiring an e-scooter will also promote sustainable travel options to a greater area of the city.
27. The addition of e-bikes offers positive benefits for the city and individuals riding them. As well as providing an active travel option, the pedal-assist can help aid faster or longer-distance travel, with reduced physical stress to power the bike compared with a traditional pedal cycle. This can make them more attractive as less exertion is required to reach a destination, whilst also providing the benefits of active travel. The pedal-assist can also be beneficial to those with joint problems, as e-bikes are seen as exerting less stress on the body than a standard bicycle.
28. The addition of e-bikes will complement the currently available e-scooters, offering choice for individuals in terms of transport mode. Their availability across the city will also enable a wide range of residents and visitors to trial e-bikes.
29. It has been an ambition of the council for some time to introduce a bike-hire scheme similar to that used in London and other cities, with e-bikes potentially proving attractive for those residents for whom a traditional pedal cycle may not be suitable.
30. In line with existing arrangements for the e-scooter rental scheme, TIER would be responsible for funding and managing all operational aspects of the trial in conjunction with local partners. There is therefore no cost to the Council in extending the service area or adding e-bikes to the trial.

Council Plan

31. Contributes to key council priorities within the Council Plan 2019-2023, 'Making History and Building Communities' including; a greener and cleaner city and getting around sustainably.

Implications

Financial

32. The trial will be managed and deliver within existing resources.

Human Resources (HR)

33. There are no human resource implications. This work will continue to be managed within existing staffing levels.

Equalities

34. The Communities Impact Assessment (CIA) is attached in Annex 1.

Legal

35. There are no legal implications.

Crime and Disorder

36. There are no crime and disorder implications

Information Technology (IT)

37. There are no IT implications.

Property

38. There are no property implications

Risk Management

39. The risks related to the trial are outlined in the body of the report.

Contact Details

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Report **Date** 07.01.20
Approved

Wards Affected: All wards.

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Community Impact Assessment