Committee of the Whole Report
For the Meeting of July 3, 2025

To:	Committee of the Whole	**Date:**	April 4, 2025
From:	William Doyle, Director, Engineering and Public Works		
Subject:	Bringing Bike Share to Victoria		

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to issue a Request for Proposals and prepare amendments to relevant City bylaws to allow for a privately owned and operated electric bike share system in the City of Victoria with an intended launch in spring 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the opportunity, feasibility and recommended operating model to bring a bike share service to Victoria. A bike share system provides publicly available, easy-to-ride bicycles and helmets that are shared between users.

Many cities in BC, across North America and around the world have established successful bike share systems. Staff have developed a recommended approach for Victoria based on lessons learned and established best practices from these jurisdictions. With a growing network of comfortable infrastructure throughout the city, a strong tourism market, and the City's role as a regional entertainment, shopping and employment centre, Victoria has the ideal conditions to facilitate a successful bike share system.

If approved by Council, implementation of a system would be completed through a competitive public procurement process with the goal to launch in spring 2026. The system would be comprised of electric bikes available across the city in designated parking zones. Bringing e-bike share to Victoria is consistent with policies and goals identified in Go Victoria, the Climate Leadership Plan and the Official Community Plan.

PURPOSE

This report provides an overview of background information, policy context, best practices, options and recommended approaches to supporting a successful bike share system in the City of Victoria. The report seeks direction from Council for staff to issue a Request for Proposals to allow for a privately owned and operated electric bike share system in the city.

BACKGROUND

What is bike share?

A bike share system provides publicly available, easy-to-ride bicycles and helmets that are shared between users and typically rented through a smartphone application. Bike share is particularly well-suited for one-way trips, trips integrated with transit, for visitors, those worried about bike theft and those that do not own a bike or e-bike but want to try one. A bike share system complements other shared micromobility options that have been operating in Victoria since the 1990s, such as car share services.

From 2017-18, a private company, U-Bicycle, operated a dockless bike share service in the region, including within the City of Victoria. As with most early versions of dockless bike share, the pilot was implemented rapidly without an accompanying regulatory framework. The lack of fleet management practices and user requirements resulted in accessibility concerns for pedestrians and operational maintenance challenges for City crews. The lack of regulations and requirements combined with unsophisticated technology led to a high degree of theft and vandalism. These lessons learned have contributed directly to this report's recommendations.

In the last seven years there have been considerable advancements in bike share technology, infrastructure and best practices in regulating and managing these types of services. Devices are custom-built for modern shared micromobility systems, last longer, are easier to park and use, and are less prone to theft and accessibility concerns than their predecessors.

Over the last nine months, staff have extensively reviewed research and publications and met with jurisdictions across the province, bike share operators and internal stakeholders to determine the feasibility and requirements to formally bring bike share to Victoria. There are more than 3,000 bike and/or scooter share systems worldwide, including 40 in Canada. More locally, systems are currently operating in Nanaimo, Courtenay-Comox and fourteen municipalities in Metro Vancouver. In January 2025, the City of Langford closed the intake on their Request for Proposals for a shared micromobility provider.

Why bring bike share to Victoria?

In 2023, according to the North American Bikeshare and Scootershare Association, 37% of shared micromobility trips in North America replaced trips that otherwise would have been taken by motor vehicles. Access to shared micromobility would provide another sustainable transportation option for residents and visitors. Go Victoria, adopted in 2019, includes a goal of accelerating shared mobility choices through dedicated parking, curb space management and the adoption of new bylaws and permitting processes. Go Victoria supports the electrification of shared mobility services which reduce vehicle ownership.

As of 2022, 13% of all trips in Victoria were made by bicycle (one of the highest modal shares in the country). Residents and visitors are supported by nearly 40 km of All Ages and Abilities routes throughout the municipality. With a dense, growing urban environment where 80% of households have one or fewer vehicles, and a strong visitor market, Victoria offers ideal conditions for a successful bike share system. There is increasingly an expectation from visitors that modern cities offer shared micromobility.

Data from the CRD Origin and Destination study (2022) show that while e-bikes make up only 10% of bikes owned, they represent 30% of the cycling trips in the region. In the City of Victoria, 65% of residents own a bicycle, but only 8% own an e-bike.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

There are different ownership models, parking models and types of devices that can make up bike share systems. This report provides the recommendations for each with details on other models available in Appendix A.

Ownership Models

There are typically four different ownership models for bike share systems:

- Publicly owned and operated.
- Publicly owned and externally operated.
- Privately owned and operated.
- Publicly administered but privately owned and operated.

The recommended model for Victoria is a publicly administered but privately owned and operated system. Under this model, the City would select the operator through a public procurement process. The selected operator would provide the devices and booking system, manage day-to-day operations and set the rental fees to generate revenue. This is currently the most popular approach in Canada as it allows for a high degree of regulation and oversight while limiting the public investment required. This model also allows experience and expertise to be obtained, which could be used if a different ownership model was considered in the future. Disadvantages of this model include a lack of control over pricing for users and implications if the system is not profitable for the operator.

Best practices for successful application of this model include:

- Selecting a sole operator through a competitive procurement process to support financial viability and offer a consistent user experience and set of regulations and expectations.
- Establishing a proactive and collaborative relationship with the operator.
- Introducing a robust framework of rules and regulations that allow for strong municipal oversight and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of both parties.
- Providing a contract that allows both the city and operator to have clarity and certainty.

Parking Models

There are typically three different parking models for bike share systems:

- Docked
- Dockless
- Parking zones

The recommended parking model for Victoria is requiring shared bikes to be parked in designated parking zones around the city. This model has many of the same benefits of docked systems while replacing the permanent locking stations with a cheaper, lighter and more flexible approach. Typically, geofence technologies (a virtual boundary) are used in combination with a painted, signed boundary to demark the dedicated parking zone. Dependent on location/anticipated demand, these

will be approximately the size of a single vehicle parking space. Parking zones could be upgraded to docked charging stations in the future if desired. Constructing and providing the parking zones for use by the selected operator allows for ownership of the parking zones for potential future versions of shared micromobility systems, provides more control over location and design, and allows the operator to focus on other elements of the system.

Best practices for siting parking zones include:

- Locating them on a consistent basis in visible, easy to access spaces to make them predictable to find.
- Locating them at key destinations on or in close proximity to All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling routes to increase convenience.
- Right sizing each parking zone to ensure sufficient space while recognizing competing demands for public space.
- Ensuring sidewalks, pedestrian pathways and boulevards are kept clear to mitigate impacts to pedestrian accessibility and tree health.
- Providing city-wide coverage and equitable distribution of parking zones and available devices to serve all residents.

Devices

There are typically three types of devices that are used in shared micromobility systems:

- Classic bikes
- E-bikes
- E-scooters

The recommended model for shared devices in Victoria is to implement e-bikes only. Shared e-bikes are being used much more widely and for longer trips than classic bikes and are more accessible to a wider range of the population. Disadvantages include that they tend to be priced higher than classic bikes for the user due to being more expensive to purchase and maintain. E-bikes also require charging, which tends to be done through battery swapping, where removable batteries are charged off-site and replaced with fully charged batteries. At this time, e-scooters are not being recommended due to the lack of permanent provincial regulation surrounding their use on streets, along with parking and safety concerns. It is recommended to ensure the e-bike share system is successful prior to considering expansion to other devices.

Best practices for shared e-bikes include:

- GPS on all bikes and batteries.
- Adjustable helmets attached to every bike.
- Speed limiters to control maximum speeds of devices.
- Double kickstand to facilitate parking in parking zones.
- Remote power and locking control.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendation is approved by Council, staff will prepare a Request for Proposals to solicit a private provider to operate a bike share system in Victoria. Staff would also prepare amendments to relevant City bylaws to ensure proper regulations are in place for the anticipated launch in spring 2026.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 – Issue RFP for E-Bike Share (RECOMMENDED)

Direct staff to issue a Request for Proposals and prepare amendments to relevant City bylaws to bring a privately owned and operated electric bike share system to the City of Victoria for intended launch in spring 2026.

This option will align with the recommended operating model of a publicly administered but privately owned and operated system comprised of electric bicycles available at mandatory parking zones throughout the city. Supporting elements will include community partner engagement and an education and communication campaign.

Option 2 – More Research

Direct staff to conduct additional research and continue monitoring shared micromobility trends and best practices before reporting back to Council at a future date. This option delays any implementation of an e-bike share in Victoria until at least 2027.

Option 3- Do Not Move Forward

Direct staff to not move forward towards bringing an e-bike share system to Victoria.

Accessibility Impact Statement

If embedded into the system, bike share will advance the objectives of the City's Accessibility Framework by enhancing equity and accessibility. By integrating universal design principles, bike share can support the City's commitment to equitable transportation options, public space and the built environment.

E-bikes can offer people with certain disabilities increased mobility, well-being, and independence. E bikes require less physical effort and have been found to be used more by diverse populations in bike share systems. Requiring parking zones, rather than a dockless model, will significantly reduce sidewalk clutter, mitigating accessibility concerns. Equitable placement of parking zones will improve access across the city, particularly in areas with limited transit service. Affordability concerns may be partially addressed through low-income pass programs as part of the Request for Proposals process, with further equity considerations explored through community partner engagement and the procurement process.

To ensure accessibility and safety for all users, including those with disabilities, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) will be consulted throughout the planning and implementation phases. The AAC supports the recommendations for parking zones and the devices to be e-bikes.

Provincial regulatory requirements will restrict access to those old enough to operate an e-bike (14 or 16 years old, dependent on the type of device provided by the operator).

2023–2026 Strategic Plan

Implementing e-bike share aligns with many of Council's strategic priorities in the Strategic Plan including in Transportation, Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship, Community Well-Being and Safety and Economic Health and Vitality.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Operating costs for implementing city-wide bike share are anticipated to be borne by the selected private operator and owner of the system. Any loss of parking meter revenue through the creation of parking zones is anticipated to be offset through the provision of new paid parking spaces throughout the city. Capital costs for building all the parking zones are anticipated to be between $100,000 and $200,000 and would be integrated with major capital projects and delivered through the City's existing annual capital Transportation budget. Maintenance costs for parking zones would be integrated into annual operating budget within Public Works. Existing staff resources would also be used to manage the operating relationship with the selected provider.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Shared mobility services, including bike share, aligns with the updated Official Community Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

With more than 40km of All Ages and Abilities cycling routes, increasing density, and the growing popularity of e-bikes, Victoria is now ready for a regulated bike share service. While there are many different models for shared micromobility services, a privately owned and operated bike share system using mandatory parking zones and e-bikes is the best option for Victoria at this time. This model allows for municipal oversight with rules and operating regulations secured through a procurement process and limits financial risk to the City. A well-planned and managed system can further the City's mobility and climate goals and provide valuable services to residents, visitors and commuters.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments
Appendix A: Further Information on Micromobility Models