

**Submission
No 119**

INQUIRY INTO USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS

Organisation: North Sydney Council

Date Received: 14 August 2024



Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Chair, Use of e-scooters, e-bikes
and related mobility options
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

13 August 2024

Dear Ms Faehrmann,

Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the *Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options*.

On behalf of North Sydney Council (Council), I am writing to formally submit our views and insights to the Inquiry. As a proactive local government authority committed to sustainable transport solutions, Council recognises the growing importance of e-mobility in promoting accessible and environmentally friendly urban mobility. We also acknowledge the challenges that increased use of e-mobility devices has created, particularly regarding pedestrian safety.

This submission addresses all the items outlined in the terms of reference.

Key Moves

- Increase funding for active transport so that local government can deliver separated cycling facilities and road safety initiatives.
- Ensure that e-mobility and lithium-ion batteries are adequately regulated to reduce potential fires and ensure devices are not altered.
- Deliver a buy-back scheme for low quality e-mobility devices for food delivery riders.
- Work with Food Delivery Services, such as Uber, to ensure delivery riders have adequate training and understand the Road Rules 2014.
- Deliver a docked bike share system to reduce street clutter.

1. Benefits of E-Mobility

E-mobility has the potential to diversify our transport system, reduce congestion and promote healthier communities. E-mobility devices provide the following benefits:

- Significantly less pollution and greenhouse gas emissions compared to private vehicles.
- An affordable mode of transport that requires minimal maintenance.

- More accessible than traditional bicycles as they remove physical limitations such as fitness levels and steep topography.
- Reduces traffic congestion and parking demand.
- Encourages physical activity, improving physical and mental health outcomes among users.

Council supports the growth of e-mobility for these reasons, however, believe there are key issues that need to be addressed to ensure their safe use.

2. Local Government Perspective

Council receives ongoing feedback from our community on the benefits and issues they face with growing e-mobility use. We have identified the following four challenges from the local government perspective.

2.1 E-Bike Food Delivery Services

Food Delivery Riders spend more time on our roads each day than most bike commuters in a week. There is a growing demand for delivery services due to their ability to navigate urban environments quickly. They offer a sustainable alternative to traditional delivery methods, reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion.

Our community have raised concerns regarding delivery riders on footpaths, particularly in high pedestrian precincts. Council is limited in the action we can take from a regulatory perspective as enforcing the road rules is not the role of local government. There appears to be a gap in knowledge of the road rules for many Delivery Riders and insufficient infrastructure to separate riders from pedestrians.

2.2 Bike Share Services

Bike share systems, such as Lime Bike and Beam, offer a flexible transport mode that has the potential to reduce pressure on public transport and driving, particularly for shorter trips. The North Sydney LGA does not currently have Bike Share operating in the area; however, we still receive complaints and concerns from our community for share bikes that are dumped outside their operating area. Council have also been in communication with council areas with bike share operations, and aware of considerable community dissatisfaction regarding footpath clutter.

There are ample international examples of docked bike share systems that would address footpath clutter. See section 3.1 for best practice dock bike share systems.

2.3 Non-compliant and Altered E-Bikes

Media attention has highlighted concerns about e-mobility Lithium-ion battery fires. The ACCC's October 2023 report addresses safety risks and mitigation strategies for lithium-ion batteries in a variety of devices, including e-mobility devices (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 2023).

Council is supportive of the recent reclassification of Ee-mobility devices as 'declared electric devices', which increases safety standards to be internationally recognised and have appropriate tests and certification. We support this change and encourage the enforcement of this regulation.

However, there are now numerous e-mobility devices on our roads that do not meet these standards and are potentially dangerous. These lower quality devices are often purchased because they are more affordable and are used for income generation (such as food delivery riders). State Government should provide an e-mobility buy-back scheme for lower quality devices, especially those dependent on these devices for employment.

New York City has dedicated \$2 million (USD) in funding for a buyback scheme. See section 3.2 Case Study: Buyback scheme.

2.4 Funding for Active Transport Infrastructure and Road Safety

In 2023, State Government allocated 0.13% of the transport budget to walking and cycling. This does not align to the United Nations recommendation to allocate 20% of transport budgets to walking and cycling and inhibits councils' capacity to deliver separated cycleways from pedestrians.

Separated cycling facilities, local road infrastructure and road safety education around e-mobility devices are key to reducing conflicts and encouraging safer behaviour on our roads. However, inadequate funding hampers progress.

Council calls for a commitment to increased funding so that we have can deliver the infrastructure and programs required for safe e-mobility use.

3. Best Practice

The following two case studies provide an example of the benefits of a docked bike share system in Montreal and a buyback scheme in New York that takes unsafe e-mobility devices off the road while not penalising those on low incomes.

3.1 Case Study: Docked Bike Share System

Montreal's bike share system, BIXI Montreal, has become a model of urban mobility since its launch in 2009 and operates over 7,200 bicycles and 600 docking stations throughout the city. This docked bike share system offers significant benefits over floating bike share system as it reduces street clutter, contributes to a sustainable transportation network and improves the overall user experience.

Benefits of Dedicated Bike Share Bays include

- Organized and Predictable Parking: Dedicated bays provide clearly defined parking spots, reducing street clutter and maintaining the aesthetic appeal of urban spaces.
- Enhanced Availability and Reliability: With fixed stations, users can reliably find bikes and docks, which enhances the predictability of the system.
- Improved Maintenance and Management: Centralized docking stations facilitate easier maintenance and redistribution of bikes.
- Safety and Security: Docking stations provide secure locking mechanisms and providers ensure that the E-Bikes cannot be tampered with.
- Community Integration: Strategically placed docking stations promote integration with public transit systems, encouraging multimodal and efficient transportation.

This approach would address various safety and amenity issues with the floating system operating, address common logistical challenges and promotes a cleaner, safer, and more efficient urban environment.

3.2 Case Study: New York City Buyback Scheme

New York City's food delivery industry has seen an increase in the use of low-quality e-mobility devices. To address this, the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) has dedicated \$2 million (USD) for an e-mobility buyback scheme.

The scheme allows for the exchange of unsafe e-bikes and lithium-ion batteries for new, safer alternatives. It aims to reduce fire and crash risks associated with uncertified devices, help delivery workers comply with state and local regulations, and promote the use of cleaner, more sustainable forms of e-mobility.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- be at least 18 years old
- reside in New York City
- own a working, eligible device
- have earned at least \$1,500 as a food delivery worker in the past year.

The scheme ensures that unsafe e-mobility devices and lithium-ion batteries are fully removed from city streets.

4. Recommendations

Council recommends the following actions to address safety issues and fully capitalise on the benefits of e-mobility.

- Expedite and resource new regulations for the sale of e-mobility devices to remove the sale of poor quality li-ion batteries to minimise fire risks.
- Fund and deliver a buyback scheme for low quality e-mobility devices used by food delivery riders.
- Additional resourcing to Police so they can regulate the use of E-bikes and E-scooters, particularly on the footpath.

- Reduce speeds on local roads and commercial districts to 30km/hr to provide a safe on-road travel environment for riding e-bikes.
- Increase funding to deliver separated cycling infrastructure and road safety programs
- Work with food delivery companies to ensure food delivery riders are adequately trained and aware of the Road Rules 2014.

5. Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback into the *Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options*. Council appreciates the proactive approach the NSW Government is taking to address and promote e-mobility and for considering the experience that local government has in this space.

The recommendations and case studies provided in this submission will support the growth in e-mobility and ensure the safety of the community. Council consents to this submission to be made publicly available.

Your faithfully,

Gary Parsons
Director Open Space and Infrastructure
North Sydney Council