

Key ingredients for successful shared micromobility



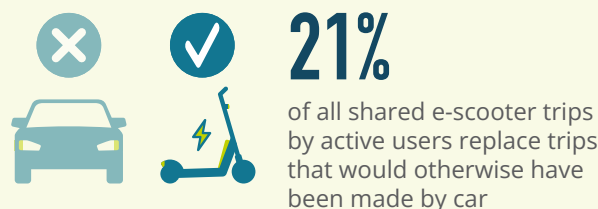
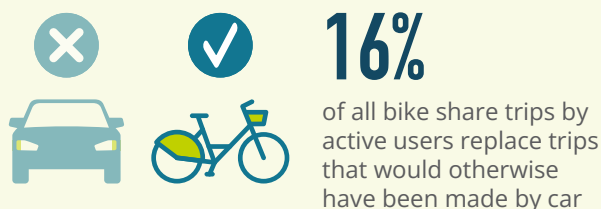
Why shared micromobility is important

Travelling by shared bike, e-bike, and e-scooter is a popular and convenient way to get around our towns and cities in the UK. These publicly accessible micromobility modes provide an affordable, flexible means to get fresh air and exercise and at the same time help to address key policy goals to reduce congestion, emissions, social exclusion and inactivity.

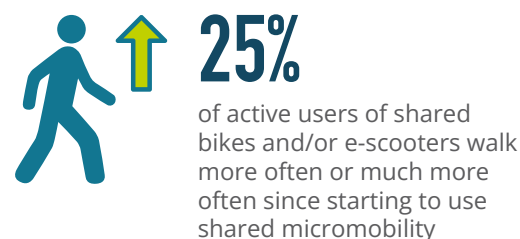
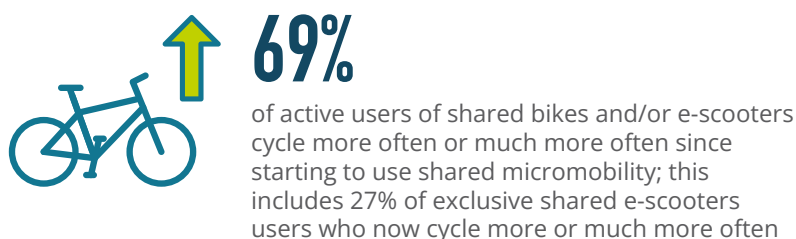
The latest research from CoMoUK into the benefits of shared micromobility can be read here, below are some key statistics.



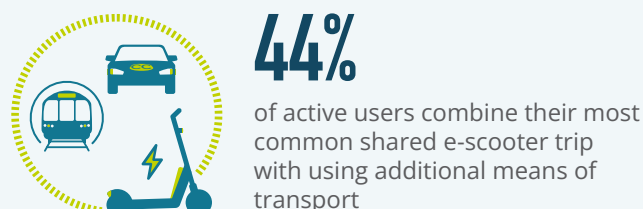
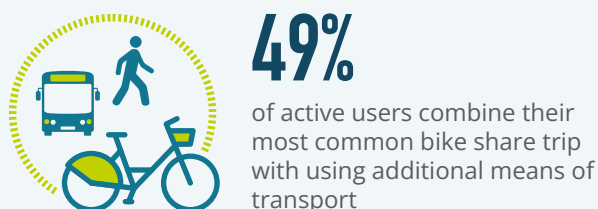
SHARED MICROMOBILITY HELPS REDUCE CAR TRAFFIC



SHARED MICROMOBILITY INCENTIVISES ACTIVE TRAVEL



SHARED MICROMOBILITY USERS COMBINE THEIR JOURNEYS WITH ADDITIONAL FORMS OF TRANSPORT



Managing schemes requires the right scheme design, the right on-street provision of bays and a strong partnership between authorities and providers developed through a well-designed commissioning

process. This guidance outlines the key points to consider when setting up or renewing a scheme in your area.

Scheme design

It is important to think through the design of a micromobility scheme in terms of its objectives, the mix of modes, its scale and how it will be managed on the ground.

The objectives of the micromobility scheme will be determined by council priorities and the aims of the contributing funding streams. The overarching goal in cities often varies from encouraging low carbon commuting, to maximising active travel or supporting first and last mile trips.



Getting the right mix of modes

Current micromobility modes include conventional pedal bikes, electric assist bikes, (e-bikes), and e-scooters. Some operators are looking at variations upon this with 2-seater bikes. Currently e-scooters are only allowed in areas approved for the DfT trials. It is expected that this position will change with future legislation, which may also bring forward variations upon these modes such as seated e-scooters.

Understanding the scheme objectives will help to direct the mix of modes, having a mixed fleet will support a wider range of trip purposes and people.



	Pedal bikes	E-bikes	E-scooters
Key policy benefits	Supports a focus on active travel.	Supports a focus on car reduction across wider areas. Also supports active travel especially for less physically able.	Supports car reduction across city centres. Good for physically less able.
Costs	Lower capital costs. Lower operational costs but requires subsidy.	Higher capital costs. May be slightly higher operational costs from battery swapping which is reducing with tech innovations.	Lower capital costs. Lower operational costs.
Ridership	Lower ridership unless there is subsidy to keep fees low and encourage use.	Higher income from high ridership.	Higher income from high ridership.
Funding needs	Requires subsidy.	Depends on the area and demand.	Can help support costs of e-bikes.
Vandalism	Higher vandalism rates as they are rideable without being activated.	Lower vandalism as they are unappealingly heavy to ride when not activated.	Lower vandalism rates as they are not usable when not activated.
Inclusion	Can support affordable travel when there is public subsidy.	Supports longer trips and opens up cycling to less able or less confident riders.	Supports users who are unable to cycle.

Getting the density and parking right

Picking up a shared bike or e-scooter should be as convenient as getting to a bus stop. In city centres, people don't want to walk more than 200-400 metres or 2-5 minutes.

As far as possible, using car parking spaces to provide space for the bikes rather than the pavement will minimise obstructions for pedestrians.



There are three main ways in which vehicles are parked:

- 1** Docked parking: vehicles are locked to physical infrastructure on the ground.
- 2** Marked bays: vehicles can only end rides within geofenced areas, reinforced with ground marking and signage. There are a range of ways in which this can be executed from simple lining through to more elaborate infrastructure with planters and frames.
- 3** Free-floating: vehicles can be parked in any area according to parking rules set out in the app. Operators often require a photograph to be submitted and AI systems check it is correctly parking. Warnings and fines can be issued for those not following the rules.

The term “dockless” is best avoided as it doesn't differentiate between the latter two operational models.

	Pros	Cons
Docked parking	• Manages vehicles away from pedestrians • Improves operational efficiency • Can reduce some theft and vandalism	• Higher costs to install and repair if targeted for vandalism • Less flexible if a bay needs moving • Requires high density of bays • Forces vehicles into one place • Doesn't improve parking compliance vs marked bays
Parking in mandatory marked bays	• Manages vehicles away from pedestrians • Improves operational efficiency • Can be moved relatively easily • Works well in dense city centres	• Requires high density of bays • Forces vehicles into one place
Free-floating	• More natural dispersal • Flexibility for users • Works well in suburbs	• Vehicles can be left on footway • Can be a cause for concern for visually impaired and wheelchair users
Hybrid of marked bays and free-floating parking	• Allows the benefits of each approach to be used in most suitable settings	• Requires extra education • Can cause confusion for users

Choosing and designing parking bays

Do:

- ✓ Choose easy to find, well-lit locations with good footfall for safety
- ✓ Ensure bays are convenient and not hidden for users coming out of large trip generators such as rail stations
- ✓ Use a standardise and intuitive design which encourages good parking
- ✓ Use clear signage and road markings
- ✓ Diagonal bays work in well narrower space
- ✓ A limited number of existing Sheffield stand parking can work but only as an interim measure

Don't:

- ✗ Place micromobility in areas with poor visibility for traffic to ensure safety
- ✗ Avoid placing bays on pedestrian islands in the middle of roads which encourage users to park on adjacent pavements rather than crossing into the middle of the road
- ✗ Place bays next to single-use car parking bays such as disabled or doctor bays as the geo-fencing may not be accurate enough to avoid spill over
- ✗ For mixed fleets 50-60 cm width per vehicles can support both bikes and scooters



Procurement and financial considerations

Subsidy

Shared micromobility schemes generally have narrow profit margins at best and rely on a supportive environment to become sustainable. Most areas will require funding but the more supportive the environment is, the less funding will be required. Early market engagement is essential to allow each authority to assess the need for funding in their area and to design a scheme which is financially viable in the long term.

The characteristic of a supportive environment would include having a high density of residents, workers and tourists in the area, as well as having many trip generators, safe routes and a strong cycling culture.



Subsidy will be required:

- in lower demand areas such as small and medium sized towns
- in larger town and cities with a desire to serve the surrounding suburbs
- in areas with fewer cycle routes and without a strong cycling culture
- if there is a desire to support under-represented groups
- if pedal bikes are required
- if e-scooters are not included in the brief
- if there is a need for docked infrastructure

In all locations funding is valuable to drive ridership and can be targeted to specific groups such as people low-income areas, job seekers, essential workers or disabled people.

Financial contributions from operators and permit costs

There are only a few locations in the UK which generate sufficient profit to make it possible for a payment to be made to the council from operators, either as part of the procurement process or ongoing profit sharing. Pressuring the sector to focus on funding will lead to less investment in sustainability, safety and social impact.

If the operating area is profitable enough for a financial contribution from the operator to the council to be viable, it should be via a set fee or a revenue share agreement which is the same for all bidders rather than an auction where it forms a large part of the scoring. In recent years requests for a contribution have taken the form of a request for a

financial contribution within procurement exercises, often with a disproportionate weighting. There have been several examples of tenders having no bidders due to unrealistic financial requirements for financial donations and profit sharing. If there are permit charges at all for parking bays, these should be set at realistic level, factoring in mind all of the wider policy benefits shared micromobility brings to the council.

It is logical and desirable to ensure any additional financial contribution to the council income is invested in initiatives to support use of micromobility such as promotions, parking bays and segregated lanes.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship can be a useful tool for cities to tap into. The value of the sponsorship is not just about the vehicles but also space within the app and bays. Sponsorship is not essential, but it can help to:

- Raise the profile of the scheme and normalise it amongst the general public
- Bring in important resources to drive ridership
- Bring in expertise and marketing reach through joint campaigns

Procurement routes

All opportunities to run a micromobility scheme should be subject to a transparent competitive process. Operators should be required to have CoMoUK full or provisional accreditation.

In smaller cities and towns, a single operator approach is likely to be the only viable option. Opting for multiple operators can add value through density and choice as well as driving competition in larger areas although it will require additional coordination. It is common for both bikes and e-scooters to be operated by the same operator in a city but there are some examples of the modes being split between two providers with good agreements over managing shared parking bays.

E-cargo bikes or adapted bikes or long-term loan schemes are best managed in a round-trip model and run by a specialist operator and not included in an on-street city scheme.

Most operators expect to retain ownership of the assets whilst running a scheme. This allows the operator to upgrade the assets throughout the contract life, providing upgraded rider features, security and efficiency that comes with hardware development that the industry is currently experiencing.



Santander Cycles TfL, London (Serco)

Photo credit: Waqar

Table of pros and cons of procurement routes

	MoU	Tender
Pros	• Less administrative burden for the local authority • Ability to regulate who enters the market • Ability to ensure compliance with operating rules	• Total ability to regulate who enters the market • Strongest levers to ensure compliance with operating rules
Cons	• Less regulatory control than a full tender process	• Most administrative burden for the local authority • Often subject to delays and challenges

Criteria for assessing bidders

The procurement specification should provide an overall vision for the scheme and what it seeks to achieve. Non-negotiable minimum requirements should be kept to a minimum and be clearly defined and informed through market engagement. CoMoUK bike share accreditation provides a thorough checklist for assessment criteria. [Read full details here.](#)

Summary of key assessment criteria from CoMoUK accreditation

- **Minimum design safety requirement** - Minimum design standards (e.g. lights, reflectors, brakes) to ensure uniform safety across operators.
- **Maintenance** - Requirements for operators to maintain a regular maintenance schedule, with minimum inspection frequency and record-keeping.
- **Capital requirements** - Operators must demonstrate adequate financial backing to launch, maintain, and, if needed, wind down the scheme without burdening the local authority.
- **Exit plan** - Operators should have an approved exit plan before entering a market. This would ensure that if the scheme fails commercially, they can remove their fleet from a locality, preventing vehicles being abandoned.
- **Operator credentials** - Requirement to have a clear track record of experience, financial stability, and success in other regions. This would include minimum operator insurance coverage to protect both users and the public.
- **Accessibility** - Requirements to collaborate with disability organisations to address potential barriers, such as parking impacts and vehicle design, to ensure inclusive access for all.

The UK Government has introduced the English Devolution Bill to Parliament which contains a bike share licensing mechanism. Assuming this becomes law, bike share (but not e-scooter share) will be licensed to a centrally designed and overseen system for the first time. CoMoUK will be heavily involved in debates around the Bill and its ramifications, and we will revise this guidance appropriately in the future.



Partnerships

Working with operators to develop local partnerships will help to boost ridership, manage street space and reduce criminal damage.

Marketing partnerships & boosting social inclusion

The operators have experience of creating socially inclusive schemes, ensuring services are accessible to a broader cross section of the community, by providing discounted access to low-income groups, for example, students, disabled people, people 65+, refugees and asylum seekers, NHS staff, emergency service personnel, military personnel and veterans.

The use of digital promotions tools such as Voucherify and BetterPoints can be useful to develop partnerships with local retail outlets and boost ridership. Partnerships with cycle-to-work scheme providers can also be used to offer employees a tax-free way to sign up for the service.

Partnerships with local charities can help to raise awareness of shared bikes and scooters and overcome barriers to use with training sessions. Social prescribing schemes are another route to supporting residents to enjoy active travel using the bike share scheme.



Advice to avoid criminal damage

Developing partnerships can be particularly important when protecting the vehicles on the street. Some key actions to consider include:

- Build strong relationships with the police. The Designing Out Crime Team can help with the positioning of parking. By providing evidence to the police of criminal damage they can take early action and secure convictions which can nip vandalism in the bud. The fact that operators can share the location of tracked vehicles can also be useful to the police to tackle other criminal activity.
- Build community support and a sense of ownership of the scheme which then provides local support and surveillance. Develop inclusion programmes can provide low-cost use of the scheme to a wider range of residents.
- Work with local landowners and businesses to place the bikes and scooters in well-lit areas with good footfall and ideally CCTV.

- Integrate parking bays with other services within mobility hubs.
- Develop hardware to protect vulnerable parts of the vehicles.
- Ensure there is flexibility to move bays if they are attracting too much criminal damage.
- Agree a limit to cost of criminal damage beyond which the authority will share responsibility.

Before beginning the process of commissioning or renewing a scheme, it is important to consider all the of the issues outlined in this guidance, as well as carrying out market engagement with operators. This will ensure the development of a successful and sustainable shared micromobility scheme.

Contact

For more information or to get tailored 1:1 consultancy support contact info@como.org.uk.

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