

E-scooter expansion strategy

Briefing note

September 2021

Background

To support a 'green' restart of local travel and help mitigate reduced public transport capacity, the Department for Transport (DfT) fast tracked and expanded trials of rental e-scooters, stating that e-scooters could offer the potential for fast, clean and inexpensive travel that could also help ease the burden on transport networks and allow for social distancing.

Solent Transport rental e-scooter trials

Solent Transport was granted permission to run rental e-scooter trials by the DfT in late 2020. These trials comprise of Isle of Wight (IOW), which launched on 27 November 2020, and Portsmouth, which launched on 16 March 2021, with Southampton following on 18 March 2021. The trials are scheduled to end on 26 November 2021, which is one year after the commencement of the IOW scheme. A proposed scheme in Winchester was not taken forward under the Solent DfT trial due to challenges with timescales, but Hampshire County Council may develop a scheme at a later date.

Portsmouth scheme

Portsmouth launched their rental e-scooter trial on 16th March 2021 with operator Voi, which currently has permission to operate until 26 November 2021. The DfT has announced trials can be extended until March 2022 and move to pilot schemes after this period. The existing trial will inform any permanent scheme if the DfT alters legislation to enable them.

The Portsmouth scheme has mandatory parking zones, all of which include physical e-scooter parking racks. There were 17 parking racks zones active at launch with 100 e-scooters. There are now 50 parking racks with 481 rental e-scooters.

PCC strategic approach

The rental e-scooter scheme is part of a strategic approach to travel in the city which works towards the vision of our draft travel strategy;

By 2038 Portsmouth will have a people-centred, connected, travel network that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport to help deliver a safer, healthier and more prosperous city.

The strategic objectives of the travel strategy delivered together improve connectivity for residents, visitors and businesses in the city, enabling people better access to places through joined-up travel whether by foot, cycle, public transport or other transport modes.

When rental e-scooters are delivered as part of a wider programme of transport improvements such as cycle infrastructure, bike hangars, bike share, car clubs, and public transport improvements there is opportunity to achieve a cohesive network of viable and attractive travel choices which can replace short distance private car journeys.

The rental e-scooter trial should consider this wider strategy and deliver towards it going forward.

Rack expansion

Following launch additional parking racks have been installed in Portsmouth as part of a phased approach which looked at requests and Voi's recommendations for new locations.

Voi's recommendations were based on;

- **Hub density/oversupply/availability metrics**
 - Hub density is a metric to define how many hubs there are in a given area, which affects the walking distance for users and therefore propensity to rely on the service vs using a car. Voi's target is 15 per square km for 3-4 mins average walk to a hub and 25 per square km for 2 mins average walk to a hub, and they state that anything less than 15 per square km typically leads in a drop-off in demand for the service
 - Oversupply measures where there tend to be too many e-scooters at an individual hub, and suggests prioritisation of additional racks nearby, to balance demand and alleviate the risk of clutter.
 - Availability is a metric which defines how many vehicles will generally be available in a given area, at a given time. There are different benchmarks for density of parking zones based on the area - e.g. residential vs commercial.

- **Available space**

Consideration is given to the space available, potential obstructions and expected demand based on the area - i.e. locations in the suburbs will generally see fewer vehicles than more central hubs. Voi would prioritise a hub on a wide open footway vs one with more limited space.

- **App opens**

Voi analyse data on where app users open the app, across the city. When they see a high density of 'app opens' in areas where we have limited hub coverage (or do not operate at all), they use this to inform prioritisation of new hubs in that area, as it suggests there is untapped demand.

Future strategy

As the trial is now into its seventh month of operation, and the existing approach does not systematically consider Portsmouth's strategic approach to travel around the city, the rack location/expansion strategy is being reviewed.

Rental e-scooters are part of a package of solutions to achieving modal shift from private car journeys in the city, with preliminary survey results for Portsmouth encouragingly indicating that 44% of e-scooters users would otherwise have used a private vehicle or taxi for their journey. As such, they should be considered alongside cycling offers such as bike hangars and emerging bike share plans, emerging car club plans and public transport. In line with this rationale, consideration should also be given to trialling carriageway racks in areas where footway sites are less suitable and/or where a carriageway rack might fit well with the local context (e.g., on quieter, more people-centred streets). Such carriageway sites have been successfully implemented elsewhere, and Voi's new Type 3 rack (see image below) has been designed to be implemented on the footway or carriageway. Potential carriageway sites would be reviewed by the Rental E-scooter Trial Board.

Voi's 'Type 3' parking bay

Encloses scooters to prevent collisions with pedestrians or vehicles. Can be installed on pavement or in-road.



In order to generate modal shift and to seek to improve connectivity across the city future, rack proposals should meet some or all of the following principles:

- Areas served less well by public transport
- At transport interchanges/hubs/ close to other transport modes to enable connectivity between modes
- Located at key destinations including large employers and attractors in the city - including on private land
- Locations which support economic recovery such as local shops and restaurants
- Locations with good cycle infrastructure nearby - providing safe routes and discouraging footway riding
- Located near to residential areas with a focus on those demographics proven to have or more likely to have the propensity to use rental e-scooters (while simultaneously working with Voi to reduce barriers to scooter use across all demographics, to ensure equitable access for all Portsmouth residents and prevent the development of "e-scooter deserts")
- Areas of existing rental e-scooter high demand where increased provision is required
- Visible and accessible locations

Next steps

The public survey closes 18th September 2021, and the results of this will be analysed and included in a report to be brought to the Traffic and Transportation meeting in November. This paper will also include reference to the above strategy seeking formal approval.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the board approve the set of eight principles for new parking locations to be actively pursued and assessed against in future phases which will be brought as part of a paper reviewing the trial to the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportations meeting in November 2021.

This approach would work towards the holistic strategy to achieve modal shift, improving air quality and carbon emissions, and contributing towards public health and economic growth.