



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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**TO: Chair and Members of Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
DESTINATAIRE : Présidents et membres du Comité de l'infrastructure et des travaux publics**

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**SUBJECT: Update on the Ottawa Gatineau Bike Share Feasibility Study
OBJET: Le point sur l'étude de faisabilité du système de vélos en libre-service d'Ottawa-Gatineau**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to satisfy the Council direction ([ACS2023-OCC-CCS-0085](#)) from June 2023 to report back to Committee and Council with an update on the feasibility of introducing a bike share program in Ottawa. The Bike

Share Feasibility Study has been completed. This memo outlines the findings to date and details staff's intent to carry out additional review of cost considerations and system types (public versus private) and develop a funding and rollout strategy. The Bike Share Feasibility Study is being released to the public concurrent with this memo and is attached as Document 3.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its meeting of June 28, 2023, directed staff to continue working towards the development of a bike share program this term of Council. Staff were further directed to:

- a. Update the information on bike sharing that was reported in 2021 as part of the Public Bike Parking Strategy;
- b. Incorporate the relevant findings of current studies being carried out by Envirocentre/Ottawa Climate Action Fund and by the Transportation Association Canada on shared micromobility services; and
- c. Report back to Transportation Committee in 2025, with recommendations on an appropriate bike share model that would serve the needs of the City.

A bike share system would align with the City's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan. Bike share supports multimodal transportation, helping people to access transit, and enables people to have more mobility options to choose from for everyday trips. This would in turn help to reduce congestion and the climate impacts from transportation.

DISCUSSION

New Information Since 2023

There are three initiatives that have been helpful to clarify bike share options and requirements:

- Bike Share in Ottawa-Gatineau Initial Report
- Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) report on Shared Micromobility Services in Canadian Communities
- Ottawa-Gatineau Bike Share Feasibility Study

Bike Share in Ottawa-Gatineau Initial Report

EnviroCentre and Ottawa Climate Action Fund released an initial report in 2024 titled [Bike Share in Ottawa-Gatineau: A Missing Piece of the Local Transportation Puzzle](#).

The report describes the history and context of bike share in Ottawa-Gatineau and other cities in Canada, and outlines a vision based on feedback from engaged stakeholders for a regional bike share system. City of Ottawa staff participated in the study as stakeholders and provided input to the report, however, the findings were developed by EnviroCentre and Ottawa Climate Action Fund.

Shared Micromobility Services in Canadian Communities

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) released the [Shared Micromobility Services in Canadian Communities](#) report in February 2025. It describes the role of shared micromobility services among diverse mobility options, and how micromobility services can make transportation systems more efficient, effective, equitable, safe, and sustainable, such as by improving connectivity to transit and increasing the number of transportation options available to residents. The report inventories current practices from across Canada, including the different service models and management types, and provides discussion on successes and challenges.

The report discusses the differences between systems that are publicly led (where the municipality or jurisdiction invests in equipment and funds any related net operating costs) and privately led (where private companies apply to receive a permit to supply bikes and operate the system within certain parameters). Publicly led systems have the advantage of the municipality having more control to guide the system to meet its larger transportation and city-building goals, however, privately led systems require less public investment.

The table in Document 1 provides a more detailed summary of the differences between the two system types.

Ottawa-Gatineau Bike Share Feasibility Study

In 2024, the City of Ottawa, along with the other regional partners (the Ville de Gatineau and National Capital Commission), commenced a Bike Share Feasibility Study. That study is now complete. The Feasibility Study examines what type of bike share model would best meet the stated objectives, what the system would entail, its expected cost, and what it would require to be sustainable.

The Feasibility Study established four primary objectives for a regional bike share system to guide the study:

- Supports a multimodal transportation system that complements public transit, helps grow transit ridership, and gives people more options to get around without a car.
- Provides a reliable service that is available on demand and is designed to last.
- Supports the people who need mobility options most by locating in equity-deserving areas and offering affordable pricing.
- Reduces car trips in the region, helping to address congestion and lowering the region's transportation-related carbon emissions.

Additional objectives included enhancing the practicality of cycling, providing a cherished community service, and supporting economic activity.

A regional system that includes both Ottawa and Gatineau was the basis of this study as it was considered to provide greater benefits for both cities by enabling a single cohesive system on both sides of the Ottawa River.

The Feasibility Study identified an initial system size and density based on where bike share would receive the most potential use and have the greatest need, while also being useful to a critical mass of users and sustainable over the long term.

The Feasibility Study suggests pursuing a publicly supported bike share system. A public system would better support the goals and objectives of the City, and would align with the practices of other successful, long-term systems in Canada such as Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, and Quebec City. It should be noted that the City of Ottawa has enabled private companies to operate a bike share system in the city since 2020 as part of the shared e-scooter pilot ([Transportation Committee Report 9, 10 June 2020](#)). To this point, no companies have come forward with a formal proposal to do so.

Although bike share systems in Toronto and Montreal now operate year-round, the Feasibility Study recommends operating over three seasons to start, to reduce the initial cost and complexity. Options to include e-bikes as part of the system were also explored. It is anticipated that e-bikes would increase the number of people that would use the system, and help people travel further, but would introduce increased capital and operational costs.

A dock-based system is identified as the preferred parking model because it is more intuitive for users and provides a more organized public realm, eliminating concerns about mis-parked vehicles impacting accessibility for pedestrians. While docked-based models have additional capital costs for the docks, their operations and equipment are proven to be successful in other major Canadian cities and have long lifespans. Based on the research, a dock-based system is only possible with public investment.

A pro forma financial analysis was developed in the Feasibility Study based on the anticipated user demand. The analysis includes the one-time capital and launch costs, predicted operating costs, and a range of potential revenue scenarios based on ridership projections and assumed sponsorship contributions. Based on this analysis, the following costs are anticipated:

- Upfront one-time capital costs between \$9 million and \$10 million for the City of Ottawa.
- The annual operating costs for Ottawa's portion could range from \$450,000 to around \$2.2 million depending on the inclusion of e-bikes and the revenue generated from users and sponsors.

These costs do not include potential funding from other partners such as the National Capital Commission, and other levels of government through grant programs.

CONCLUSION

There has been considerable advancement to set the stage for bike share in Ottawa since 2023. The Feasibility Study provides suggestions for establishing a useful and sustainable bike share system in Ottawa-Gatineau, which is supported by the findings of the TAC Shared Micromobility report. However, additional information and review is necessary prior to bringing forward a recommendation to Committee and Council.

In particular, the cost implications associated with investing in a bike share system require further consideration, and additional work is needed to:

- Complete a more comprehensive assessment of the two system models (publicly led vs. privately led);
- Assess the market to obtain more information on options and interest in a privately led bike share system;

- Develop funding strategy options for a publicly led bike share system, considering possible funding solutions (example: through partner funding, grant opportunities, etc.); and
- Determine if there are options for a lower cost initial rollout of a bike share system.

In the interim, the Bike Share Feasibility Study is attached as Document 3 to this memorandum.

Moving forward, staff will continue work to respond to the above requirements, with the goal of arriving at a recommended approach for bike share in Ottawa. It is currently anticipated that a report to Public Works and Infrastructure Committee will be brought forward in Q2 2027.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: Comparison of publicly led and privately led bike share systems

Document 2: Executive Summary – Ottawa Gatineau Bike Share Feasibility Study

Document 3: Ottawa Gatineau Bike Share Feasibility Study

Document 1: Comparison of publicly led and privately led bike share systems

	Publicly led	Privately led
Funding Requirement	Requires capital investment Moderate operating costs, depending on the level of cost recovery from user fees and sponsorships	Generally limited direct cost to the City (additional staff costs to manage the contract/vendor could be paid through the program)
City Control	Better ability to align system in support of priorities such as sustainability, transit access, equity, and accessibility	Decisions are primarily revenue-based to maintain interest from the private operator
Deployment	Strategic deployment could better support first / last mile transit use and stations located in areas with higher equity need Operates as a public service, similar to transit	Similar model to e-scooters – bikes positioned to serve high demand areas and maximize financial returns for operator
Bike Parking	<u>Docked</u> : Strategically placed / spaced docking stations create predictability for users and eliminate issues related to mis-parked bikes	<u>Dockless</u> : Operators will typically not invest in docking stations due to cost Results in bikes parked in different locations within the right of way, potentially obstructing pedestrians. Can be managed by geofenced hubs, but less effective than docked systems
Continuity Risk	Longer-term involvement assured through public investment which better positions the system to become part of the transportation network and plan for long-term growth	There are no assurances that a vendor will participate over an extended period of time - if a vendor finds it to be unprofitable, the likelihood is that they would stop the service
User Costs	Greater ability for a city to ensure affordability	These systems tend to be more expensive for the user
Implementation Timing	Longer implementation timelines due to up front needs (funding securement, station placement) ~18 months	Expected shorter implementation due to lack of docking station-related infrastructure ~ 6 -12 months
Example Cities (# of bikes)	Toronto (10,000) Montreal (12,000) Quebec City (2,300) Vancouver (2,700) *Only received initial capital funding	Calgary (200) Edmonton (420) Halifax (300) Mississauga (300)