Staff Memorandum

To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	Ministry of Transportation E-Scooter Pilot Program – Status Update and Public Feedback
Date	December 10, 2025
Ward	All
From	M. Banfield, RPP, Executive Director of Development Services
Executive Member Approval	M. Banfield, RPP, Executive Director of Development Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Council with an update on the Ministry of Transportation's electric kick-scooter (e-scooter) pilot program, summarize current e-scooter use in Barrie, and present results of recent public consultation seeking feedback on whether the City should participate in the pilot.

Background

The Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) established a five-year provincial pilot program in January 2020 under O. Reg. 389/19 of the Highway Traffic Act. The pilot authorizes municipalities to permit e-scooters by by-law, subject to operating requirements (e.g., age limits, helmet use, maximum speed, operating locations) by opting in to the MTO pilot program. In 2024, the Ministry extended the pilot by an additional five years, allowing municipalities to continue to opt in until 2029.

It is currently illegal to operate an e-scooter on City streets, sidewalks, trails, and in parks. Despite this, staff have observed increasing numbers of residents using e-scooters in the community. To better understand local perspectives, staff undertook public consultation to gather resident feedback on whether e-scooters should be permitted in the City. In addition, staff completed a high-level assessment of the provincial pilot program.

E-scooter Pilot Program

The provincial pilot is intended to test and evaluate the safe integration of e-scooters into Ontario's transportation system before deciding whether to permit them permanently.

Under the framework, e-scooters are restricted to a maximum speed of 24 km/h, maximum weight of 45 kg, and must be equipped with lights, brakes, and a bell. Riders must be at least 16 years of age, helmets are required for those under 18, and sidewalk riding and passengers are prohibited. Municipalities must pass a by-law to opt in and have discretion to determine where e-scooters may operate, whether to permit rental operators, and what local requirements should apply. Appendix A includes a photo of a typical e-scooter.

Currently, 11 of 19 municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area that contain an Urban Growth Centre have opted in to the pilot in some form, permitting either personal e-scooters, shared rental systems, or both (as of Q3 2025). The pilot's extension to 2029 is intended to provide more time for municipalities and the Province to gather evidence on safety, ridership, and regulatory approaches. Appendix B lists participating municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area with Urban Growth Centres.

Why E-scooters?

E-scooters are attracting attention across North America and globally because they offer a flexible, low-cost, and sustainable mobility option. They are often used for short trips that might otherwise be made by car, and they help riders connect to transit services by filling the "first-mile/last-mile" gap. Their small size also makes them a space-efficient mode compared with automobiles, reducing demands on both roads and parking.

For municipalities, e-scooters are seen as supporting a shift away from car dependency, advancing transportation equity by offering an affordable option for those without access to a vehicle, and helping to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. They also complement broader goals related to climate action, sustainable transportation, and providing residents with more travel options. While uncertainties remain, e-scooters are recognized as an emerging mode of transportation that municipalities will need to monitor and plan for.

Current Status of MTO E-scooter Pilot Program

Since the launch of the provincial pilot in 2020, municipal participation has been gradual, with most programs beginning in 2022 and 2023 due to delays associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This limited rollout contributed to the Province's decision to extend the pilot to 2029 to allow more time to gather meaningful operating data and evaluate regulatory approaches.

At present, there are no published lessons learned or consolidated best practices. Municipalities continue to face uncertainties around liability, enforcement, and safe integration with pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Current (Illegal) E-scooter Use in the City

E-scooters are illegal to operate on public property, which includes all City streets, bicycle lanes, trails, sidewalks and parks. Fines may be issued by Barrie Police Services or By-law Enforcement.

Although illegal to operate, e-scooter use is growing in the City, with staff observing increasing numbers of residents using privately owned devices. This reflects the broader popularity of e-scooters in urban centres. There has also been interest from a e-scooter rental operator in providing shared (rental) e-scooters. Tourism Barrie and the Downtown Barrie Business Improvement Area have expressed preliminary interest in exploring potential benefits for tourism and the downtown economy.

Resident Feedback

A survey was conducted between July 28, 2025, and September 1, 2025, receiving nearly 1,200 responses. 51% of respondents were in favour of permitting e-scooters. 42% of respondents were in favour of permitting an e-scooter shared (rental) service.

60% of respondents reported concerns about permitting e-scooters with significant concerns centred on non-compliance with regulations (40%) and pedestrian safety (32%). Open-ended responses reinforced these themes, with calls for mandatory helmets, insurance/licensing, speed limits, and strict enforcement. Many respondents questioned whether enforcement is realistic given existing pressures on police and by-law officers. Survey results can be found under documents at www.buildingbarrie.ca/exploringescooters.

User Safety & Injuries

Studies indicate a rising injury trend, especially among children and youth, exacerbated by low helmet use and failure to operate e-scooters with appropriate care and caution. When falls or collisions occur, injuries can be severe, with the potential for life-altering or fatal outcomes.

Municipal Risk and Liability

Commentary from the municipal legal and insurance sector has highlighted concerns regarding unsettled liability framework associated with e-scooters, with the outcomes of ongoing cases likely to influence how municipalities manage risk moving forward.

If a municipality opts into the pilot and an e-scooter collision occurs, injured parties may pursue claims directly against the municipality if they believe that inadequate regulation, infrastructure, or enforcement contributed to the incident, regardless of fault. This contrasts with collisions involving cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists, where decades of legal precedent provide courts with a well-established framework for assessing municipal responsibility, and the rights and responsibilities of these users are clearly defined in statute and case law.

Although e-scooters are illegal to operate, claims have been filed against the City.

Staff Assessment

There has not yet been sufficient data gathered by the Ministry of Transportation to fully understand risks associated with broader e-scooter use, develop best practices to manage safety and liability, or determine the adequacy of current infrastructure and regulatory requirements. While demand for e-scooters is evident, significant uncertainties remain.

At this time, staff are not pursuing participation in the provincial e-scooter pilot program and will continue to monitor the pilot through its extended duration.

Appendix:

Appendix A – Photo of an E-Scooter
Appendix B – Municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area with an Urban Growth Centre participating in the E-scooter Pilot Program

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File #:

Not Applicable

Pending #:

Appendix A – Photo of an E-scooter



Appendix B – Municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area with an Urban Growth Centre Participating in the E-scooter Pilot Program

GGHA Municipality with UGC	Pilot Participation	Opt-In Year
City of Toronto	No	-
City of Mississauga	Yes	2021
City of Brampton	Yes	2022
City of Hamilton	Yes	2020
City of Markham	Yes	2024
City of Vaughan	Yes	2023
City of Kitchener	Yes	2022
City of Oakville	No	-
City of Richmond Hill	No	-
City of Burlington	No	-
City of Oshawa	Yes	2022
City of Barrie	No	-
City of Guelph	Yes	2023
City of Cambridge	Yes	2022
Town of Milton	No	-
City of Waterloo	Yes	2022
City of Pickering	Yes	2023
Town of Newmarket	No	-
City of Peterborough	No	-

Current as of Q3 2025
GGHA – Greater Golden Horseshoe Area
UGC – Urban Growth Centre