



## **Submission on Personal Powered Transporters**

**November 2019**

*Personal Powered Transporters, including e-scooters and e-bikes, are environmentally sustainable forms of urban transport. E-scooters in particular offer a positive addition to the urban transport landscape and can reduce congestion and encourage modal shift by acting as a 'last mile' solution. Dublin Chamber calls on the Department of Transport to heed the report requested of, and provided by, the Road Safety Authority on the use of e-scooters. The report suggests that e-scooters should be supported as a form of low-emission transport, with the necessary safety guidelines, regulations around speed, and age limits. Dublin Chamber argues that road tax and insurance requirements should not be introduced at a high cost that would reduce the popularity of e-bikes and e-scooters; and that appropriate regulations should address safety concerns. Government policy should facilitate a form of transport that makes Dublin a more sustainable and resilient city, and can contribute to climate change targets as set by the Department of Communications, Climate Action, and the Environment.*

### **Introduction**

Dublin Chamber is the representative body for 1,300 businesses in the Greater Dublin Area, responsible for employing 300,000 people nationally. It is the largest Chamber of Commerce in Ireland, with membership from across the business spectrum. Dublin Chamber has a strong history of advocating for improved transport infrastructure in the capital city region and for smart solutions to make Dublin a great city in which to live, work and do business. E-scooters and e-scooter sharing schemes are a potential asset to the city as an environmentally sustainable urban transport option. They have the potential to aid in reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions, and to serve as a 'last mile' solution that is integrated with public transport system.

Dublin Chamber has called on policymakers, through multiple channels, to look at the opportunities for e-scooter technology to become a part of Dublin's transport mix. In December 2018, the Chamber made a submission to the Department of Transport, calling for regulation of the use of e-scooters to allow for their use in an urban setting.<sup>1</sup> We highlighted the anomaly created by the classification of e-scooters as mechanically propelled vehicles (MPVs) requiring insurance and road tax despite an inability to obtain these for e-scooters. The Chamber also highlighted the absence of appropriate regulations to support their safe use. Nearly a year later, the popularity of e-scooters has persisted and the requirement for guidelines and regulations for their use has increased.

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<sup>1</sup> Dublin Chamber E-Scooters as Urban Transport, [https://www.dublinchamber.ie/DublinChamberofCommerce/media/banners/Dublin-Chamber\\_E-Scooters\\_Submission\\_Dec-2018.pdf](https://www.dublinchamber.ie/DublinChamberofCommerce/media/banners/Dublin-Chamber_E-Scooters_Submission_Dec-2018.pdf)

A report commissioned by the Road Safety Authority and produced by TRL Limited at the behest of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport shows that with the introduction of the appropriate guidelines and safety measures, e-scooters can be a positive addition to the Irish transport landscape, acting as an efficient and low-emission means of mobility. The findings of this report reflect the position of Dublin Chamber and are very welcome. The Government has an opportunity to successfully integrate e-scooters into Dublin by putting regulations in place now, while e-scooter proliferation is still at a relatively early stage.

### **E-Scooters as Sustainable Urban Transport**

A failure to move quickly to appropriately regulate e-scooters, and other Personal Powered Transporters like e-bikes, calls into question the commitment of the Department of Transport to the goals set out in the recently launched *All of Government Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown*. This plan obliges every Government department to take necessary steps to reduce emissions, and was announced with the warning message that “the time for taking action is rapidly reducing”.<sup>2</sup>

Dublin suffers from some of the worst congestion in the world. Its population is expected to grow by 25% by 2040, and the need for new urban transport solutions will only increase. E-scooters are an ideal low emission solution. E-scooters and other forms of e-micro mobility are an aid to reducing congestion as well as a way to significantly decrease harmful emissions. If an e-scooter travels 16km per day, it will produce 3,500g less carbon dioxide than a car that travels the same distance.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that if 10,000 people were to switch to e-scooters, their combined CO2 emissions would decline by 35 metric tonnes per day. The *All of Government Climate Action Plan 2019 to Tackle Climate Breakdown* targets a reduction of emissions from the Transport Sector by 45%-50% relative to 2030 pre-NDP projections. It is difficult to see this target being met if Government fails to take advantage of the low emissions options provided by micro-mobility technology and e-scooters in particular.<sup>4</sup>

E-scooters, both privately owned and in station-less sharing systems, offer a ‘last mile’ solution; they plug the gap between public transport and a final destination.<sup>5</sup> For many commuters, for example, there is too much of a gap between the closest public transport hub and their place of work. A station-less sharing system could strategically place e-scooters near key Dart or Luas stops to take commuters the ‘last mile’ to work, a journey that may previously have appeared too lengthy to take on a daily basis by foot. E-scooters have the potential to completely replace certain daily car journeys in urban areas.

The safety concerns commonly discussed around e-scooter integration to the urban transport system point to much wider infrastructure issues, particularly the lack of adequate and safe cycle-ways. Dublin Chamber is a strong advocate for improved cycling infrastructure in the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/news-and-media/press-releases/Pages/Giving-Ireland-a-Sustainable-Future.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Irish Examiner <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/views/analysis/smart-local-governments-should-clear-the-path-for-electric-scooters-939430.html>

<sup>4</sup> Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Climate%20Action%20Plan%202019.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Irishtimes.com <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/dublin-one-of-worst-cities-in-world-for-traffic-congestion-1.3791651>

capital.<sup>6</sup> However, in the absence of this and other improvements to Dublin's transport offering, usage of e-scooters can only be expected to increase.

Dublin needs joined up thinking for its public transport system to work well. Public transport planning should include provision to optimise the potential of smart city solutions like e-scooter technology. For example, e-scooter sharing stations or depots should be facilitated near major public transport hubs, such as Heuston, Pearse, and Connolly Stations and near LUAS stops. E-scooters also offer a cost-effective form of mobility for those who live in areas of Dublin that are under-served by the public transport system. The technology can enable people from all socio-economic backgrounds to gain further access to employment and education opportunities across the city.

### **New Technology**

Dublin has a unique opportunity to be the home of a global industry that has gone from zero to a worldwide city phenomenon in just two short years. The DCU Alpha Innovation Campus is home to a consortium of innovative companies working as 'Mobility360' at the forefront of the next generation of e-scooter technology. Currently, Mobility 360 is working with some of the biggest names in the industry to provide the next, safer, generation of e-scooters.

New technology is being worked on by Mobility360 which will entirely transform the governance of e-scooter sharing systems. It will achieve this by bringing a new level of granularity and control to issues around compliant parking, accurate geo-fencing, and overall rider behaviour. The possibilities for remote control monitoring and journey data have significant potential for Dublin from a Smart City perspective. Mobility360 has already made significant forward strides in solving safety issues that came to light with the first generation of e-scooters. As is the case with many first generation technologies, certain aspects of the original warrant tweaking and innovations to improve overall safety and function.

Furthermore, interest has been expressed by station-less e-scooter companies; European-based Voi, for example, has a track record of working with local governments to create systems that work for local circumstances.<sup>7</sup> This system utilises new technology to create an in-built speed limit and to limit the use of station-less vehicles to certain parts of the city.

If Dublin is to improve the efficiency and environmental sustainability of its transport offering, policymakers must be willing to engage constructively with industry and adapt to new technologies as they develop. Similarly, the freedom for development in the micro-mobility space for trialling and piloting should be encouraged by ensuring that new legislation is not required each time there is a new innovation.

### **Regulations at Present**

As we outlined in our submission to the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport last year, and as has been widely reported in the media, e-scooter usage currently operates in a

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<sup>6</sup> Dublin Chamber Cycling Submissions <https://www.dublinchamber.ie/getattachment/e19c749b-9da6-4dd5-93cf-f977c0b2abe4/Dublin-Chamber-Submission-on-the-Royal-Canal-Premium-Cycle-Route-Broome-Bridge.pdf?lang=en-IE>  
<https://www.dublinchamber.ie/DublinChamberofCommerce/media/Policy-Documents/Fitzwilliam-Cycle-Route-Submission-October-2018.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Voi <https://www.voiscoters.com/>

legal grey area. There has been inconsistency in relation to enforcement, with e-scooter users frequently unsure as to whether they will be stopped and their e-scooters confiscated. According to An Garda Síochána, e-scooters are categorised as mechanically propelled vehicles and therefore require insurance and road tax.<sup>8</sup> This position, supported by the Road Safety Authority,<sup>9</sup> is based on the Road Traffic Act 1961 Section 3(1) which defines a mechanically propelled vehicle as:

*'a vehicle intended or adapted for propulsion by mechanical means, including – (a) a bicycle or tricycle with an attachment for propelling it by mechanical power, whether or not the attachment is being used, (b) a vehicle the means of propulsion of which is electrical or partly electrical and partly mechanical, but not including a tramcar or other vehicle running on permanent rails;'*<sup>10</sup>

This law precedes any semblance of e-scooter or e-bike technology and contains no specific reference to it, but is being applied in such a way that e-scooters are subject to the definition. If Smart City solutions such as e-scooters are to be held back by laws that predate the possibility of their existence, it sets a negative precedent for the embracing of opportunities presented by new technologies in the fight to reduce emissions.

Notably, despite the presence of e-bikes in Dublin and an imminent increase in their use due to sharing systems, there has been scarce focus on electric bikes as a source of safety or enforcement concerns. Authorities appear to have adopted a more pragmatic approach that takes into account the need to allow for new modes of urban transport when it comes to e-bikes.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, e-bikes currently do not require insurance and road tax. Station-less e-bikes are another form of urban transport that is slowly being introduced to the city, and which have not faced the same level of scrutiny. BleeperBikes, which has operated a station-less bike scheme in Dublin since 2018 will be rolling out e-bikes in the near future; and Moby was granted a license by DCC to launch station-less e-bikes into the Dublin market in August 2019, planning an initial rollout of 250 bikes by September.<sup>12</sup>

### **Insurance and Road Tax**

Dublin Chamber believes that insurance and Road Tax should not be imposed at a prohibitive cost for e-scooter users, and other Personal Powered Transporter users, as this may result in a pullback in their popularity and discourage modal shift. If Government is to achieve a reduction in emissions from the transport sector and reduce congestion in urban centres, it is crucial that barriers are not introduced to low emission options. Considering that road tax and insurance are not required for manual bicycles, which can reach speeds equivalent to that of e-scooters and e-bikes, these should not be required at a high cost for Personal Powered Transporter usage so long as appropriate speed limits, and age requirements, are put in place.

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<sup>8</sup> An Garda Síochána FAQ <https://www.garda.ie/en/FAQs/?id=4853>

<sup>9</sup> RSA FAQ E-Bikes, Pedelecs, E-Scooters  
[http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/VS\\_Information\\_Notes/Two\\_Three\\_Wheeled\\_Vehicles/FAQs%20on%20E%20Bikes%20and%20Pedelecs%20and%20battery%20Scooters.pdf](http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/VS_Information_Notes/Two_Three_Wheeled_Vehicles/FAQs%20on%20E%20Bikes%20and%20Pedelecs%20and%20battery%20Scooters.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Road Traffic Act 1961, Section 3(1),  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1961/act/24/section/3/enacted/en/html>

<sup>11</sup> TheJournal.ie, [https://fora.ie/bleeperbike-e-bikes-funding-4717261-Jul2019/?utm\\_source=more](https://fora.ie/bleeperbike-e-bikes-funding-4717261-Jul2019/?utm_source=more)

<sup>12</sup> <https://fora.ie/moby-stationless-bike-sharing-4668518-Jun2019/>

## **Safety**

Concerns about safety in urban transport must be addressed by appropriately regulating Personal Powered Transporters. These can be achieved through introducing safety guidelines for their use, including speed limits, lower age limits of 16yrs or 18yrs, and night time high visibility regulations. The report provided by the Road Safety Authority details a number of ways in which Personal Powered Transporters, and e-scooters in particular, can be regulated for safety purposes, and Dublin Chamber calls on the Government to act on the report's recommendations, while remaining mindful that safety requirements do not become unwarranted barriers to potential users.<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Personal Powered Transporters, particularly e-scooters and e-bikes, have the potential to become a valuable part of Dublin's transport landscape if they are supported and appropriately regulated by central Government. Well-considered regulations including age limits, safety precautions and designated areas for usage are required to ensure that e-scooters are safely integrated into the overall transport system.

To remove the right to use e-scooters would be poorly received by those who own and use them daily and have come to rely on this form of micro-mobility in the face of an inadequate public transport system. Similarly, for those who use e-bikes, a sudden requirement for insurance and road tax at a high cost would be a step backwards in efforts to reduce carbon emissions and urban congestion. Instances of users having negative experiences with e-scooters, which also occur with other transport modes, in the face of zero to limited regulation should not be used as a reason to eliminate their use.

A failure to take advantage of the opportunity posed by e-scooters to add an environmentally sustainable form of urban transport to the cityscape will reflect poorly on the Department of Transport's commitment to its climate action objectives. Prevention of e-scooter sharing systems would deprive citizens of an eco-friendly public transport option, or a means to avail of existing public transport by filling the 'last mile' aspect of the journey.

Dublin Chamber recommends:

- Updated terms of vehicle classification should be agreed and introduced to support the use of e-scooters and similar PPTs as environmentally friendly modes of transport.
- Limits should be put in place on speed and power for e-scooters that can be used in public spaces. E-scooters, and similar PPTs, should be kept within a speed limit of approximately 20/25kmph, a speed reached by manual push bikes.
- Insurance and Road Tax should not be introduced at a rate that is a prohibitive cost to e-scooter use.
- E-scooter and e-bike sharing schemes should be enabled to integrate with public transport infrastructure to encourage their use as a 'last mile' solution.
- Pilot schemes should be utilised, particularly for e-scooter sharing schemes, in order to integrate the technology smoothly into the urban transport mix. Pilot schemes will

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<sup>13</sup> RSA TRL Limited Report to DTTAS  
<https://assets.gov.ie/26565/104b462a29fe421284339210e86ebc73.pdf>

allow Local Authorities to establish sharing scheme rules in a controlled setting with room for trial and error.

- Local Authorities should be afforded the space to work with e-scooter sharing system providers to develop a version that works in their own urban context.