



## Improving Access and Safety for Shared Micromobility Users in Santa Monica, CA

### Challenge

Santa Monica is a coastal city west of downtown Los Angeles with a population of roughly 91,000 people. The city is a leader in sustainable mobility, having been the first in Los Angeles County to launch a municipally-owned and operated bicycle share system in 2015, called [Breeze Bike Share](#). Shared micromobility devices such as bicycles, electric bicycles (e-bicycles), and electric scooters (e-scooters) create a more diverse, convenient, and accessible transportation network that can provide more transportation options, reduce congestion, and improve quality of life.



*E-scooters users in a designated lane. Image courtesy of the city of Santa Monica.*

In 2018, private e-scooter companies began operating with unsanctioned e-scooters in Santa Monica and the city needed to quickly determine how to best react to this development. After weighing their options, the city of Santa Monica approved a 16-month [Shared Mobility Pilot Program](#) allowing four private companies (Bird, Jump, Lime, and Lyft) to provide shared mobility services, including e-scooters and e-bicycles, under new city regulations. The city selected the Shared Mobility Pilot Program participating operators through a [rigorous selection process](#), which included a public comment period.

### Solution

The Shared Mobility Services Pilot allowed participating companies to deploy a set number of devices within the designated ridership area in Santa Monica. The Pilot program enabled the city to:

- Develop and refine a new area of policy, regulation, and enforcement through firsthand experience;
- Move quickly to adapt to a rapidly changing industry, while leaving room to learn and adjust as appropriate;
- Test new device and service providers in a growing industry;
- Explore partnership models with private companies;
- Explore possibilities for data capture, structures, and utilization; and
- Experiment with different management tools, such as geofencing and designated drop zones.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices





*E-scooters parked in a designated drop zone. Image courtesy of the city of Santa Monica.*

The Pilot enabled flexibility and collaboration with the participating companies. Companies had the option to request an increase in their allowable fleets, which the city evaluated based on market need, the number of devices deployed in the city, device utilization, operator performance, public safety metrics, seasonal and environmental conditions, device maintenance, and special circumstances, such as large events. The city also set minimum requirements, such as geofencing on the devices, operation of a 24/7 customer service line, and a maximum response time of two hours for public safety concerns, such as devices blocking the right-of-way (ROW). The city designed the regulations such that they could be revised during the Pilot time period as circumstances and technologies evolve. For example, geofencing on devices was encouraged rather than required at the start of the Pilot; upon further development of the technology, geofencing became a minimum requirement. Santa Monica's [current administrative regulations](#) for

micromobility were updated in April 2019 and included revisions regarding incentives for use of Shared Mobility Drop Zones, enhanced outreach and education efforts required by shared mobility device operators, and a new reduced speed for devices operating within designated zones in order to increase safety.

Additionally, the city strengthened administrative language surrounding equitable access to these devices. For example, device operators must establish and promote low-income qualified rates for shared mobility device use, and offer incentives (such as education, outreach, and payment plans) for low-income or other disadvantaged users. The regulations require device operators to distribute two thirds of their fleet outside of downtown Santa Monica, with the intent of incentivizing a more equitable distribution of devices in underserved communities. The regulations also strongly encourage operators to provide a system for user sign-up and payment enabling easy use of the reduced rates via methods that do not require a smartphone and/or access to a credit or debit card. The city used internal resources to develop and launch the Pilot, and later implemented cost recovery via a fee structure for micromobility operators. The fee recovery included annual operation fees (a lump sum from each operator, along with an individual fee per year per device); an infrastructure fee for upkeep of the ROW (\$1/device/day); and citation fees based on unlawful operation. The city used these fees to hire dedicated staff for the administration and enforcement of the Pilot, and to invest in dedicated infrastructure, such as separated lanes.

Santa Monica adopted [Mobility Data Specifications \(MDS\)](#) from Los Angeles County (now overseen by [the Open Mobility Foundation](#)) to collect, clean, and analyze micromobility data. The MDS are open-source and available in real-time, which are used by cities to enforce, evaluate, and actively manage private companies operating in a public space. Santa Monica aggregated volumes from millions of micromobility trips to identify opportunities for new protected lanes, designated drop zones, and other infrastructure. The community responded positively to the shared micromobility devices after the Pilot's launch. Eleven months into the Pilot, the city released a [Shared Mobility Community Survey](#) to better understand user demographics; rider behavior; whether shared mobility trips displaced trips by other modes; and the familiarity of users with the rules of riding shared mobility devices. Initial results from 4,260 self-selected respondents show users took shared mobility trips for a wide range of purposes, with work trips

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reported as the most common. Respondents reported that 50 percent of their most recent shared mobility trips displaced a car trip (including driving alone, ride-hailing services, taxi, etc.) and decreased their use of motor vehicles overall. Compared to other modes, respondents reported a notable increase in walking and rail transit use (18 percent and 16 percent, respectively) since using shared micromobility devices. The city also published a [Shared Mobility Pilot Program Summary Report](#) in late 2019, which outlines lessons learned and recommendations for future programming. Opportunities for future work include public ROW management; rider behavior; equity and access; device design and maintenance; and fleet management. In November 2019 the [Santa Monica City Council voted to extend the Pilot](#) through spring 2020. The extension aimed to pave the way for a second pilot program with revised regulations facilitating greater customer reliability and affordability, and more effectively achieving safety outcomes.

## Conclusion

The cultural shift among Santa Monica residents and visitors to sustainable modes like shared micromobility is a long-term challenge with no quick solutions. To address user education and safety challenges, the city deployed public education and signage around micromobility safety, [released a video](#) focused on safe e-scooter use, and created designated no-ride zones, such as the Santa Monica Pier. The city also formed the Shared Mobility Community Advisory Committee, made up of mobility advocates, subject-matter experts, and residents to examine challenges and provide suggestions to improve the Pilot program. Maintaining equitable access to the public ROW for all users also presented a challenge. Santa Monica created shared mobility parking zones, shown on an [interactive map](#), to keep shared micromobility devices off sidewalks and personal property when not in use. The agreements with device operators also allowed the city to cite and impound unauthorized or unlawfully operated devices.

Micromobility devices, even when well managed, can also present unexpected challenges. In April and May of 2020, Lime and Jump [discontinued operations in Santa Monica](#) due to uncertainty caused by COVID-19. Similarly, the [Breeze Bike Share service](#) will cease operations in November 2020. To mitigate discontinued operations, City Council voted on May 26, 2020 to extend the first Pilot Program through April 30, 2021, and postponed a previously approved second shared mobility pilot program with revised regulations until May 2021. In order to continue providing the public with reliable and safe transportation options for essential trips, Bird and Lyft are continuing to provide services through April 2021. City staff intend to return to Council in spring 2021 with recommended next steps.

In hindsight, the city believes their solicitation and evaluation approach to micromobility was more effective than ad hoc permitting. Soliciting specific proposals from micromobility operators enabled the city to not only receive more detailed data and information on the operation of the devices from the outset, but also enabled a framework for operation and a regulatory environment prioritizing the safety of all roadway users. As Santa Monica evaluates ways to improve emerging modes of shared micromobility, the city will continue to work towards enhancing access, safety, and stakeholder engagement around micromobility. Based on its experience through the Pilot process, the city suggests that other municipalities approaching this topic establish clear rules of engagement, maintain communications regarding evolving regulations within municipal departments and the public, and focus on building collaborative relationships with the private industry micromobility operators from the outset.

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*Signage designating mobility device dismount zones. Image courtesy of the city of Santa Monica.*

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