

**Submission  
No 211**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND  
RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS**

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16 August 2024

NSW Parliament

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS

Re: Inquiry Into Use Of E-Scooters, E-Bikes and Related Mobility Options

Dear Ms Cate Faehrmann,

I am writing in response to the inquiry on e-scooters, e-bikes, and related mobility. I am a senior lecturer in the UQ Business School within the tourism discipline and research lead for the [UQ Micromobility Research Cluster](#) the first and only dedicated group of university researchers studying micromobility and active transport in Australia. The cluster is comprised of leading interdisciplinary scholars across business, tourism, geography, urban planning, and transport engineering. Together we are working to move micromobility beyond commonly held misperceptions to an appreciation of the importance of micromobility in transport, leisure, recreation, and sport. Our group has worked in partnership with industry and government including Queensland Transport and Main Roads, Brisbane City Council, Australian Urban Infrastructure Network, Lime, Neuron, and Beam amongst others.

Micromobility (e.g., e-scooters, e-bikes, one wheels) offers flexible, sustainable, cost-effective, and on-demand transport options that reduce trip times and carbon emissions while generally promoting healthier lifestyles for residents (Abduljabbar et al., 2021; Buning & Lulla, 2021; Shaheen et al., 2020). For cities, micromobility is a key alternative to private vehicles and aids in connections to public transport, helping meet carbon emissions goals (Fan & Harper, 2022). With automobile transport set to be Australia's greatest carbon emitter by 2030, cities are keen to understand micromobility's role in promoting active and public transport.

However, public debates about the utility and safety of e-scooters persist creating 'moral panic' for many (Traver et al., 2023). E-scooters have certainly disrupted the active transport mix in both positive and negative outcomes, having been compared to "when automobiles appeared on streets filled with horses" (Haworth, 2021). As a research cluster, we are committed to better understanding the role of micromobility in our communities beyond misperceptions towards creating safe sustainable and connected liveable active communities.

Beyond residents, tourists constitute roughly 1/3 of shared micromobility users (Buning & Lulla, 2021), and these modes of transport can significantly enhance visitor experiences, activate destinations, facilitate visitor management, increase and disport tourist spending, and positively impact satisfaction levels within tourism destinations (Leung et al., 2022; Lin & Chen, 2018; Yang et al., 2021). Recent research we conducted for Brisbane City Council through a survey of nearly a 1,000 people and 29 follow-up interviews from random street intercepts sought to better understand transportation experiences, perceptions, and related views of the city. What did we learn?

**Other than walking, micromobility is the preferred transport option for tourists to explore and experience an urban destination**

When tourists arrive in a city, they are immediately confronted with a decision about where to visit, what to see and what to do. And more importantly, how to get to the various locations they wish to visit. From our work, we found walking is preferred but severely limited by distance, ability, and weather (Brisbane can be quite hot and humid). Public transport is considered too confusing and challenging to navigate payment, timetables and maps. Rideshare is easy and familiar but lacks an experiential nature as it misses the sights and sounds of city between stops.

So, micromobility filled the transportation gap for tourists. Our sample explained that riding e-scooters was often the highlight of the trip allowing them to reach and access all the nooks and crannies of the city, providing a more rich and 'local' experience. To easily see more and do more, that they would have likely otherwise missed in cars, buses or trains.

Micromobility provided tourists with convenience and independence to explore the city on their own schedule, which is exceptionally important as time is often argued to be the most important commodity for [tourists](#).

An international visitor to Brisbane explained it was important to them “to be in control of your own destination and stop where you want. Instead of a bus where you must figure out the schedule and where to get on and where to transfer.”

**Overwhelmingly, 80% of the user visitors we surveyed and 40% of the non-users strongly believed e-scooters enhanced their city experience which contributed to more positive views of the city overall as an active, vibrant and green community**

Riding e-scooters in the city were much more than a transport option, they created a memorable tourism experience comparable to the city's best tourism attractions (e.g., museums, parklands).

Indeed, only about 30% of respondents used micromobility in connection to public transportation. Instead, micromobility largely served as a sustainable alternative to buses, trains, and cars and for many created the best part of their visitor experience traveling around often without a specific destination in mind.

One tourist explained “It 100% added to our experience in Brisbane. I'm sure we would have had a good time, but what we would have been able to see and experience would have been far reduced.” Another said “I really enjoyed using them. It was a highlight of our trip”.

**Robust cycling infrastructure contributed to the positive views of micromobility and the city generally**

Considering tourist use, arguably Brisbane has great cycling infrastructure in the urban center with separated bike paths on both sides of the Brisbane river winding through the best and most scenic parts of the city. An international visitor stated: “What I like most is the separated paths you have for the scooters and the bikes, I call it the scooter highway.” These paths allowed tourists to explore all Brisbane has to offer without concern for traffic or getting lost.

**What about the non-users?**

Surprisingly, even those that don't use micromobility still expressed largely positive views or were indifferent. One non-user explained they viewed the city as “a bit more sustainable, trying to encourage people to use cars a little less...it encourages people to think of us as a bit more of an active community.” Only about 20% of non-user respondents expressed negative sentiment towards micromobility.

**So, what does micromobility bring to communities from a tourism perspective?**

Simply, micromobility fosters an improved sustainable, vibrant, and active city image, a preferred and easy way to explore and experience the city, better engagement with local attractions, sights, and sounds, along with [dispersed spending](#) across the destination, all together creating a memorable and leading tourism experience.

On behalf of the research cluster, we would like to work in collaboration with the committee to improve active transport in NSW and represent the diverse transport solutions micromobility provides. Our group is able to talk further via e-mail, virtual, or in person meeting.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Buning, PhD  
*Senior Lecturer, UQ Business School*  
*Research Lead, UQ Micromobility Cluster*  
*Board Director, Bicycle Queensland*

*Appendix: So, what do you think about eScooters and eBikes? Understanding visitor and resident experiences and perceptions with micromobility in Brisbane*