



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND, WA**

**AB 5447  
June 26, 2018  
Special Business**

<b>FIRST/LAST-MILE SOLUTIONS: FREE-FLOATING BIKE SHARE PILOT PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Action:</b> Authorize bike share pilot program	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
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<b>DEPARTMENT OF</b>	City Manager (Ross Freeman)
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON</b>	n/a
<b>EXHIBITS</b>	n/a
<b>2018-2019 CITY COUNCIL GOAL</b>	1. Prepare for Light Rail/Improve Mobility
<b>APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER</b>	

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$

**SUMMARY**

**BACKGROUND**

At the December 5, 2017 City Council meeting, the City Manager initiated an ongoing discussion with the Council and community regarding implementation of the Sound Transit (ST) Settlement Agreement (see [AB 5370](#)). The funds awarded by the agreement are intended to provide mitigation in a number of areas identified by the community as top priorities, including first/last-mile [mobility solutions](#). Since last December, several study sessions have explored various means of achieving less reliance on single occupant vehicles (SOVs), especially with respect to daily commuters. In late April 2018, the City launched a 6-month sponsored rideshare pilot program in partnership with service providers Lyft and Uber to transport weekday commuters to and from the Mercer Island Park and Ride.

Reducing SOV usage not only decreases congestion on local streets and regional highways, but is also a sustainability goal of the City, and would help lower community-derived greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – currently 45% of the Island’s total annual emissions are transportation-related.

At the March 20, 2018 Study Session, Council heard a variety of presentations on bicycle and pedestrian mobility opportunities, solutions, best practices, and demonstration projects, and invited a future pilot proposal by the bikeshare vendor LimeBike. At this time, the company is the only operator in the Seattle region with a significant and growing number of electric-assist bicycles in its fleet. Due to the hilly terrain of Mercer Island outside of Town Center, it is anticipated that E-bikes will encourage a far wider range of participants than pedal bikes alone. For some time, the City of Bellevue has been researching its own larger-scale bikeshare pilot, and other Eastside cities also are exploring the possibility.

In an effort to launch a small pilot program during the good weather period this summer, staff has continued discussions with LimeBike regarding options for a 3-month pilot program. The proposal delineates a range of options for a free-floating (i.e. no docking stations) bicycle rental program with different service levels and associated costs. Prospective users locate and unlock available bicycles using a simple smartphone app; rentals are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and reservations are not offered.

## **PILOT BIKESHARE OPERATIONS**

Based on previous Council discussion, and questions from individual Councilmembers, the topics listed below have been researched in advance of Tuesday evening's presentation. The City has engaged with local mobility advocacy group *Neighbors in Motion* (NIM), and is currently conducting an online bikeshare survey to gather community questions and input -- preliminary results will be presented on Tuesday evening. Questions about the condition and adequacy of the City's bicycle infrastructure were also included as part of the 2018 Citizen Survey, presented recently at the May 15 Council Meeting.

### **1) Status of Bellevue's bikeshare pilot program**

The City of Bellevue has conducted extensive scoping of the parameters it would likely require, and these were published in April 2018, along with the results of a community survey from fall 2017. Although a May or June launch was anticipated, a very thorough RFP process has delayed momentum and the launch date is currently unknown.

### **2) King County's existing bike helmet regulations**

In King County, the Board of Health passed a helmet rule in 1993 (extended to Seattle in 2003) using its authority under State statute. Although the rule was never formally adopted by Mercer Island, it is in effect here and other nearby cities, and the MIPD has the discretion to enforce it. Due to the nature of free-floating bikeshare programs, there is no homebase at which to distribute helmets to users. In response to this issue, Seattle requires its current bikeshare vendors to educate users about the importance of helmet use via their smartphone apps and at outreach events.

### **3) Rules governing E-bicycles on the I-90 Trail (aka the Mountains to Sound Trail)**

Due to the complexity of land ownership along Mercer Island's portion of the I-90 Trail, it is unclear which –if any– entity may have authority to determine new rules around the use of bicycles with electric-assist motors. A [new state law](#) allows lower-powered E-bikes with a maximum speed of 15mph (like those used by LimeBike) to operate on a "shared-use path or any part of a highway designated for the use of bicycles." This law does not pre-empt existing stricter rules in local jurisdictions, such as those that were historically in effect in Seattle. However, on May 28, 2018, the Seattle Parks Department started a 12-month pilot program setting a 15-mph speed limit and allowing E-bikes on some of its major trails including its portion of the I-90 Trail and the heavily used Burke-Gilman Trail.

### **4) MI City Code regarding riding on sidewalks**

Mercer Island has adopted the Model Traffic Ordinance (MTO), which permits bicycles on the sidewalk except in a business district (see WAC 308-330-555). Note: Bicycles may be ridden today on sidewalks in downtown Seattle and Bellevue, as long as it is done in a prudent manner so as not to endanger other users.

### **5) MI City Code regarding bicycle parking**

Through the City's adoption of the MTO, the following rules currently apply (see WAC 308-330-550): "No person shall park a bicycle upon a highway other than: (1) off the roadway except in designated areas; (2) upon the sidewalk in a rack to support the bicycle; (3) against a building; or (4) in such manner as to afford the least obstruction to pedestrian traffic."

## 6) Potential hubs on City land for daily bikeshare fleet rebalancing

Based on discussions with a wide range of staff familiar with the City streets and Rights of Way, the following City-owned or leased locations are suggested as the first *potential* hubs to consider for the staging of small clusters of rental bicycles. With a proposed fleet size of approximately 25 bicycles, not all of these locations will be needed, and some may host more bicycles than others. Insight from the vendor will be valuable in determining the best allocations. While users in free-floating systems are not required to return bicycles to specific locations, such behavior could possibly be encouraged with ride credits. As part of the pilot, the vendor would be expected to move bicycles to these hubs locations on a regular basis in order to provide convenient access to the greatest number of users (i.e. fleet rebalancing). These hub locations could be signed or striped if it becomes necessary for an orderly program.

- MI Park & Ride: small City ROW parcel at SE corner near 80<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Community and Event Center: main entrance
- City Hall: main entrance
- Fire Station 91: entry plaza/arbor
- Mercedale Park: entry plaza at NE corner
- Chamber of Commerce: ROW parcel in plaza area in front of I Luv Pho
- Congregational Church: City-leased Park & Ride stall
- South End QFC Shopping Plaza: location TBD
- Other locations: to be explored

## 7) Possibility of discouraging some parking locations via app geo-fencing

The technology to track individual bicycles is built into the vendor's software, and it may be possible for the smartphone app to discourage attempts at terminating rentals in undesirable areas (such as the middle of Pioneer Park, for example). It may also be possible to incentivize parking in areas where more future users might encounter the bicycle (for example, within Town Center, or at a City-designated hub).

## PILOT BIKESHARE PROPOSAL

Listed below are three-month pilot bikeshare program options with a range of services and associated costs, as provided by bikeshare vendor LimeBike; these will be discussed in more detail during the presentation on Tuesday evening.

### Option (A): Monthly Cost = \$1,300 to \$1,625

- 3 months
- 20-25 bikes, all electric fleet
- \$130 monthly cost per bike, split between LimeBike and the City (i.e. City pays **\$65/mo/bike**)
- Daily rebalancing Monday to Friday
- 2-hour response time for safety issues; 24-hour for parking issues
- Usage data shared via online admin tool

### Option (B): Monthly Cost = \$1,000 to \$1,250

- 3 months
- 20-25 bikes, all electric fleet
- \$130 monthly cost per bike, split (60/40) between LimeBike and City (i.e. City pays **\$50/mo/bike**)
- Rebalancing 3x/week: Monday/Wednesday/Friday
- 2-hour response time for safety issues; 24-hour for parking issues
- Usage data shared via online admin tool

Option (C): Monthly Cost = \$0

- 3 months
- 20-25 bikes, mix of pedal and electric models
- **No fee** per bike
- Weekly rebalancing
- 2-hour response time for safety issues; 24-hour for parking issues
- Usage data shared via online admin tool

The City has asked that any option be launched with a free ride to first time users, and that program outreach be conducted at Summer Celebration (July 14 & 15). LimeBike is also interested in exploring the testing of electric-scooters in the Town Center area; these would be used on sidewalks and collected nightly. This concept could be revisited if and when larger bikeshare programs in surrounding cities draft scooter regulations and launch pilot programs testing their appropriate use.

Staff recommends Option A for a period of three months (to start by mid-July) in order to secure daily rebalancing which may prove important for optimal usage of a fairly small initial fleet. Option A also provides an all-electric fleet which will likely encourage a wider range of riders and allow users to much more easily climb hills and reach destinations outside of Town Center.

## RECOMMENDATION

*Sustainability & Communications Manager*

MOVE TO: Authorize staff to proceed with Option A for a free-floating bikeshare pilot program to launch summer of 2018.