



E- Scooter Trials in London: Invitation to Tender

Since the Ministerial announcement to bring forward rental e-scooter trials in early May, London Councils' officers have been working with TfL and the boroughs to develop a co-ordinated multi-borough trial in the capital. TfL and London Councils have now launched the procurement process to select up to three operators for a London rental e-scooter trial, with an invitation to tender. This member briefing provides an update on the tender and related work to date.

Overview

E-scooters are currently illegal for use in any public place. However, they are legal to sell and use on private land and demand for these vehicles is growing, with strong sales from UK retailers. Many cities across the world have significant rental markets and the UK government has now legislated to allow trials of rental e-scooters to be undertaken legally in areas that wish to run them.

London needs to be focused on how to maximise the benefits of active travel, with safety remaining the number one priority in the capital. However, we also recognise that the coronavirus pandemic has changed the case for e-scooters in the UK, in particular the need to provide safe, green and sustainable alternatives to public transport and to avoid a damaging car-based recovery.

We are supportive of innovative solutions that might help get London moving again, if they are safe and sustainable. By offering an alternative to car trips, rental e-scooters could improve London's transport system and reduce carbon emissions.

TfL and London Councils have now launched the procurement process to select up to three operators for a London rental e-scooter trial, which will give us an opportunity to collect evidence on the use of e-scooters and collectively shape future policies on how they are used on our roads.

Promoting safety and driving higher standards has been and will remain at the core of this trial.

Background

Prior to July 2020, e-scooters were illegal for use on all public highways in the UK and could only be ridden legally on private land with the landowner's consent. The Secretary of State for Transport announced in May 2020 that to provide additional transport options during the

coronavirus pandemic, trials of rental e-scooters (which had previously been planned for 2021) would be fast tracked and begin in summer 2020.

The government has now passed regulations to allow trials of rental e-scooters to be undertaken in areas that wish to run them (as from Saturday 4 July 2020). Usage (except on private land) outside of rental schemes remains illegal. The new government regulations set the minimum vehicle standards and associated user requirements for e-scooter trials, as well as alterations to road signs necessary to facilitate the use of a new vehicle type on public highways.

For trials in major cities, DfT published guidance¹ stating that, where trial areas were to involve several tiers of local government, their preferred approach was for a lead authority to be agreed. In most cases it was expected that the lead authority would have strategic oversight across all local trial areas. This approach has been adopted in London by TfL and London Councils, and working closely with the London boroughs, we have sought to ensure a joined-up and safety-first approach to e-scooter rental in London that avoids policies and approaches varying borough by borough.

Tender

TfL and London Councils have now launched the procurement process to select up to three operators for a London rental e-scooter trial, with the issue of an invitation to tender. The process is open to all companies who want to take part. The trial is likely to launch in spring 2021, lasting for 12 months.

Safety is our top priority and ultimately this trial will help us understand if and how these vehicles can be safely accommodated in London. Operators taking part in the selection process will be assessed on their ability to meet strict safety requirements and high operating standards, putting safety first and ensuring that the trial is responsibly managed for the benefit of everybody in London.

Operators will also be required to provide critical data for TfL and the boroughs to understand the impacts of these vehicles on London's goals, including Vision Zero, a shift to walking, cycling and public transport, local borough goals, zero emission targets and the Healthy Streets approach.

By working together, TfL, London Councils and the boroughs will be able to co-ordinate a trial in the capital, promote safe and consistent standards across a defined, geographically limited trial area on London's streets.

Boroughs will control parking locations for e-scooters to protect against street clutter and will be able to designate parts of their boroughs as no-go areas where e-scooters will not be able to be ridden and will automatically come to a stop, or as go-slow areas where the speed of the e-scooter will be automatically limited to 8mph.

Like all other vehicles, e-scooters will be banned from riding on pavements but will be able to use the same space as bicycles.

TfL, London Councils and the boroughs will also continue to work closely with stakeholders, including TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group, to ensure that the trial meets the needs of everybody living in, working in and visiting the trial area.

This trial will be the only legal way of riding e-scooters in public places within London. Private use of e-scooters in any public place remains illegal, and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) are undertaking enforcement activity to deal with illegal e-scooters.

Key Questions

How is London's local government working together in the upcoming rental e-scooter trial?

TfL and London Councils, will maintain strategic oversight of the trial, leading the operator selection process, and co-ordinating with all project stakeholders. TfL and London Councils will develop a project board, which will include representatives from TfL, London Councils and the

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators>

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London Boroughs. The project board will manage reviews of fleet sizes, monitor trial compliance, evaluate against key objectives, and make key decisions throughout the trial. TfL, London Councils and the London boroughs will continue to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders and will be reflecting on stakeholder feedback throughout. As part of TfL, London Councils and the London boroughs' communications to customers, essential safe behaviours will be promoted to users.

TfL will also manage the data platform through which critical trial data will be collected while London Councils will provide regular updates to the London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee throughout the duration of the trial.

London boroughs can join as either fully participating boroughs that provide parking for e-scooters, or just be a 'ride through' only borough. Fully participating boroughs will be responsible for determining where e-scooters can and cannot be parked, ensuring sufficient parking space is available; making the necessary changes to traffic orders; setting any key zones, priority areas, no-go and go-slow areas; and ensuring compliance and managing relationships with operators at a local level. Ride-through boroughs will not provide parking but will need to make regulatory alterations and operational provisions to enable e-scooters to be ridden.

When might trials take place in London? Which companies would be involved?

A procurement process to select up to three operators for a London rental e-scooter trial is now underway. Operators seeking to deploy rental e-scooters in London will be required to meet the standards set out in the tender documents and will need to demonstrate how they will provide a safe and positive service for both riders and non-riders alike. This will include detail on maintenance, rider education, parking, environmental impact and inclusion, as well as their ability to mobilise and work with a range of partners and stakeholders. The process is open to all companies who want to take part. The trial is likely to launch in spring 2021.

In how many boroughs will the trial take place when this starts? Will this London trial permit the use of e-scooters within all London boroughs?

Around one third of London's boroughs have expressed their intention to join the trial initially, with more considering joining at a later stage.

As TfL and London Councils go out to market to begin the operator selection process, the exact trial area is subject to decisions to participate by individual councils. A number of boroughs will be involved in the trial from day one, though some may only allow vehicles initially to be ridden on their streets and not parked. Other boroughs may choose to join the trial later. The position each borough takes is flexible and can be changed.

Promoting safety as far as possible and driving higher standards has been and will remain at the core of this trial.

What safety features will e-scooters have?

Safety is our number one priority, and the purpose of taking a collaborative approach between TfL, London Councils and the boroughs is to drive up a consistent safety standard for London. The final safety criteria have been agreed by TfL, London Councils, and the boroughs, and must be approved by the DfT ahead of any trial.

The operator's vehicles must comply as a minimum with the vehicle specifications set out by the DfT – including a maximum speed of 15.5mph. In addition to these minimum standards, it is expected that all vehicles must also:

- Be capable of efficient braking at all times, including where the battery is drained and on all road surfaces in typical weather conditions
- Have a bell or acoustic warning device fitted

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- Have lighting at both the front and rear, which is always on throughout a rental
- Have a unique identification number on each vehicle which is easily visible, as well as other distinguishing features which allow an operators e-scooters to be easily identifiable as a rental vehicle. Vehicles should also be easily distinguishable from other operators participating in the trial
- Have on-vehicle information outlining contact details for reporting
- Have a means of being self-standing (e.g. a robust kickstand).

Additionally, there are further criteria TfL and London Councils will explore with operators throughout the procurement process, where we would like operators to demonstrate their expertise and experience on how they would deliver a safe trial for London, for instance how their vehicles are designed with the prevention of theft or vandalism in mind. As an attractive location we are expecting significant interest from the market, and expect to be offered the latest in cutting edge safety technology and innovations in service from around the world.

Operators will be expected to recommend and promote the use of helmets and other personal protective equipment (PPE). This could include partnerships with local businesses, or other local partners.

TfL and London Councils' requirements for operators have not only been developed in consultation with the London boroughs, but have been informed by engagement with key stakeholder groups as well as lessons learnt internationally and from other cities in the UK that have launched trials. We will continue to look at lessons learned from around the world and listen closely to key stakeholders' concerns and ideas as to how to make any trial a success.

Each selected operator will bring their own expertise in how to best achieve the safety outcomes we want to see in London, and over the course of the trial we will learn from their different approaches about how best to achieve that.

Next Steps

Clearly a collaborative approach is needed to get the best outcome for the capital. By working together, TfL, London Councils and the boroughs will be able to co-ordinate a trial in the capital, promote safe and consistent standards across a defined, geographically limited trial area on London's streets.

We have now launched the procurement process to select up to three operators for a London rental e-scooter trial and expect to launch in spring 2021. We will continue to work closely with TfL to support London boroughs preparing for the trial by hosting regular officer working group meetings, selecting operators for the trial, developing a new project board and sharing latest information from DfT and other stakeholders.

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