Shared Micromobility Readiness Study

Public and Stakeholder Consultation: What We Heard

July 2020

HALIFAX

alta PLANNING + DESIGN

Contents

Introduction

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is currently studying approaches to shared micromobility and what transportation options, such as bike share and e-scooter share, could mean for HRM. Public consultation for the Shared Micromobility Readiness Study consisted of an online survey, available via Shape Your City, and stakeholder interviews.

Shape Your City Survey Summary

An online survey was posted on the Shape Your city website from December 2, 2019 to December 23, 2019 to gather feedback and suggestions on the vision, principles, and goals to guide a shared micromobility system as well as other related demographic and commuting information. Over 1,100 people responded to the survey.

This report summarizes responses based on survey input. This feedback will assist the project team to create recommendations related to shared micromobility that consider respondents' perspectives and needs.

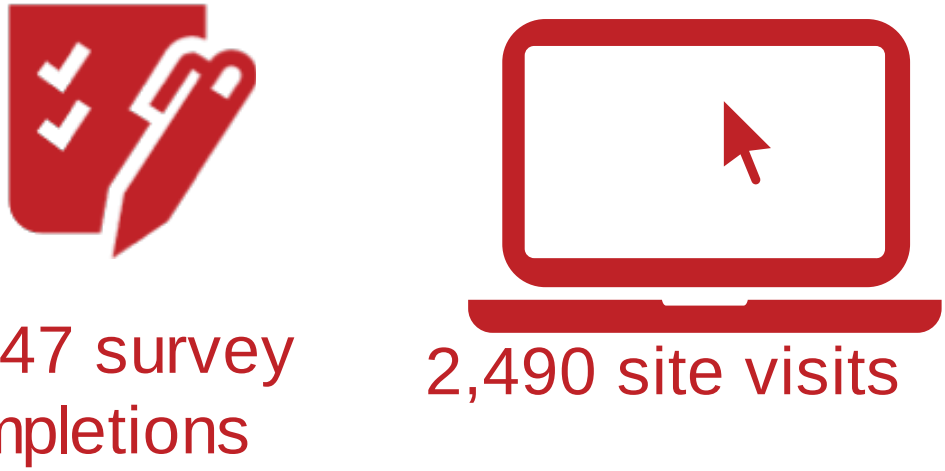

Figure 1. There were 1,147 survey completions and 2,490 visits to www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/shared-micromobility.

Key Trends

Survey respondents discussed a number of topics, which are summarized here.

Safety

- Respondents want to feel safer when biking, walking, and riding e-scooters, regardless of whether they use their own vehicle or a shared one
- Respondents discussed a need for more low-stress infrastructure, such as bike lanes, paths, and sidewalks, to feel safer when walking or using shared micromobility
- Respondents also talked about the need to create a city that works for people with and without disabilities
- While some wanted to continue mandatory helmet requirements, others felt helmets should not be required
- Walking safety was a concern, especially related to e-scooters on sidewalks and the potential for conflicts with pedestrians, including people using wheelchairs
- The potential of shared electric vehicles (e.g., e-bikes, e-scooters) was regarded positively by some, negatively by others. Positive responses were reported more often

Operations

- Reliability of finding micromobility vehicles was frequently mentioned
- People expressed differing opinions related to who should own and operate the system. Some felt HRM should leave decision-making to private operators. Others felt HRM or a non-profit should operate shared micromobility services

Climate

- Respondents frequently mentioned the need for transportation in HRM to address the climate crisis
- Respondents were interested in the potential to expand transportation options that do not rely on driving cars
- While some saw the potential of shared micromobility options to positively contribute to the municipality's climate-focused goals, other saw more potential in investing money and resources to developing infrastructure for micromobility

Equity

- Social equity was frequently mentioned in terms of service affordability, adaptive vehicles, and prioritizing the needs of pedestrians and people with disabilities
- Some called for bike share / scooter share that is free to use. Others were concerned that affordability would not be possible
- Many said that these transportation options should be available outside of downtown. Transit expansion was regarded as a way to complement the potential for shared micromobility

Vision, Principles, and Goals

The majority of people who took the survey, 90%, agree with the project's draft vision statement and accompanying principles. People who added comments about the vision mentioned the topics summarized in the preceding section.

Figure 2. Survey responses to the question, "Does this vision capture the most important aspects of shared micromobility?"

The survey asked respondents to review the project's draft principles of shared micromobility and their associated goals. The principles and goals describe how micromobility services would ideally operate in the Halifax region. Respondents then assigned a level of importance to each principle. Each principle is listed below:

- Connect people and places
- Strengthen public health and safety
- Advance environmental sustainability
- Make it accessible
- Ensure a high-quality public experience

Answer choices included: "important", "neutral", and "low importance". The majority of people who took the survey said that each principle is important. On average, across the five principles, 85% of people described them as "important", 10% described them as "neutral", and 4% described them as having "low importance". The principle "connect people and places" received the most "important" answer choices.

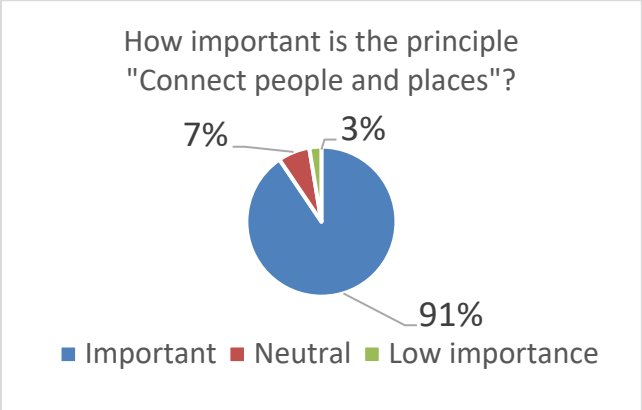

Figure 3. How important is the principle, "Connect people and places"?

Current and Potential Transportation Options

Survey respondents were asked the mode of transportation they currently use. The most common response was by car (as a driver or a passenger), but cycling and walking made up 18.5% and 12%, respectively, as shown in Figure 4.

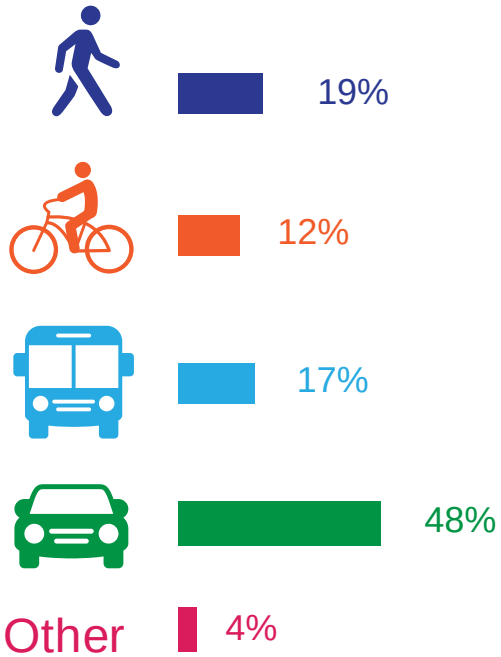

Figure 4: Primary mode share of survey respondents.

Survey respondents were asked the types of shared micromobility services they would use, if these transportation options were available in Halifax. People taking the survey were divided in terms of which form of transportation they would use: bike share, scooter share, both, or neither. No answer choice received the majority of responses. However, "both" was selected most frequently (426 responses or 37%). Generally, there was a preference for bike share over scooter share. More respondents selected "neither" form of transportation over "scooter share". Scooter share was selected the least (121 responses or 11%).

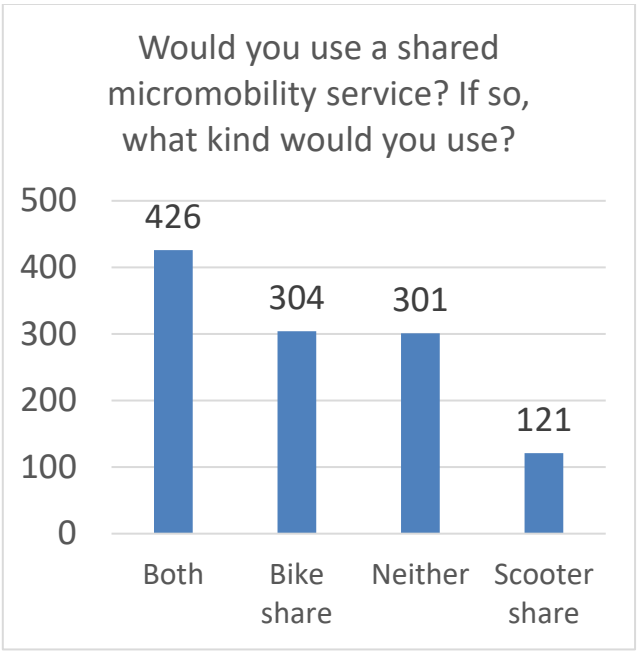

Figure 5. Would you use a shared micromobility service? If so, what kind would you use?

Just under half of respondents said they drive a car or motorcycle for most of their trips. Figures 6 to 8 show shared micromobility preference by mode choice. When analyzing answer choices in terms of mode choice, “both” was selected most frequently by people who: drive or are a passenger in a car / motorcycle, cycle, or walk. People who drive said “neither” more often than people who walk or cycle. Thirty percent of drivers or passengers in cars said they would not use either mode, compared to 20% and 21% of people who cycle and walk, respectively.

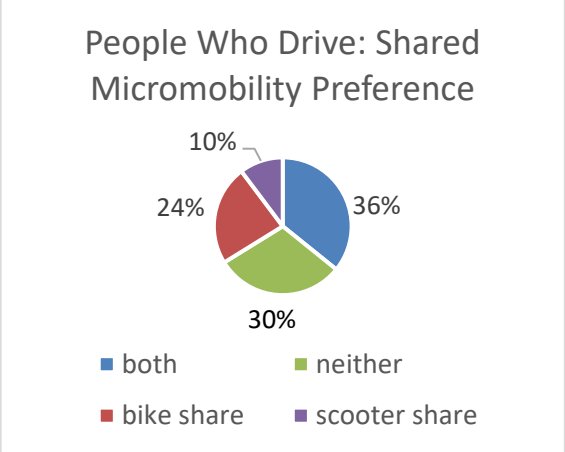

Figure 6. People Who Drive: Shared Micromobility Preference

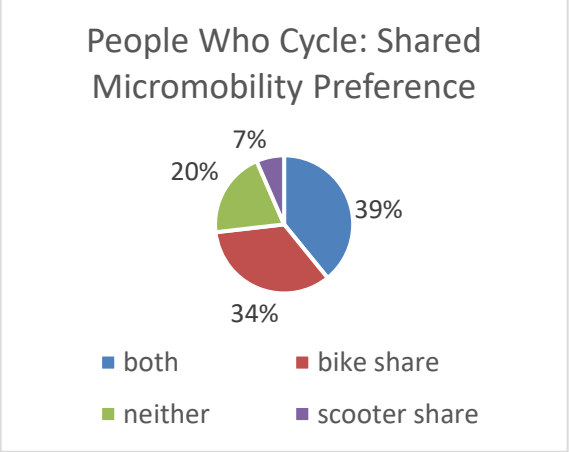

Figure 7. People Who Cycle: Shared Micromobility Preference

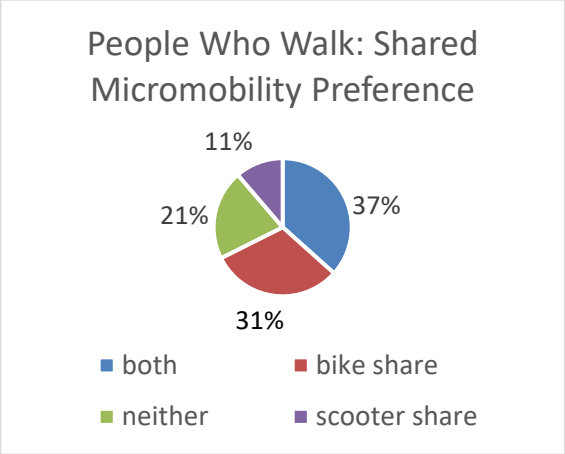

Figure 8. People Who Walk: Shared Micromobility Preference

Survey Demographics

The Shape Your City survey included questions about demographics to help us compare the cross-section of respondents with that of Halifax Regional Municipality according to 2016 census data from Statistics Canada. With respect to the age distribution, the 25-64 age group was slightly overrepresented among survey respondents. The 15-24 and 65+ age groups were somewhat underrepresented in the survey as compared to Halifax overall, as shown in Figure 9 below.

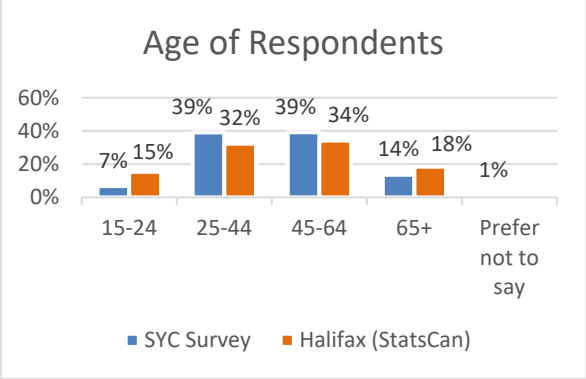

Figure 9: Age of Respondents

The ethnic makeup of survey respondents was consistent with that of Halifax as a whole, as shown in Figure 10. To be consistent with the Statistics Canada definitions, Aboriginal means First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit), and Visible Minority means not white or Aboriginal.

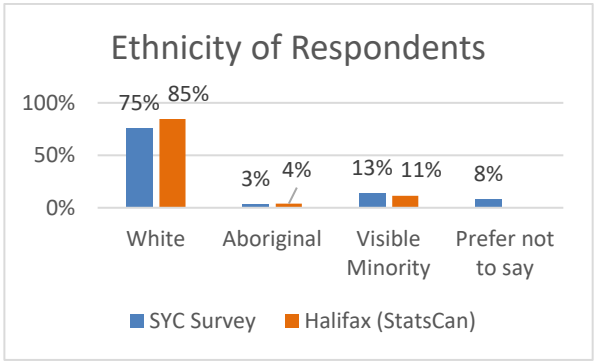

Figure 10: Ethnicity of Respondents

For gender, 52% of respondents identified as male, 42% identified as female, 5% identified as non-binary, and 1% preferred not to say. This compares to a breakdown of 48.5% male and 51.5% female for Halifax as a whole. However, the 2016 census did not include a category for non-binary people.

The map on the following page, Figure 11, illustrates Shape Your City survey respondents' locations. This map was created based on the first three digits of the postal code that survey participants provided. The areas with a darker red colour indicate that more respondents identified themselves as living in that postal code area. The map was created based on the mid-point within each postal code area.

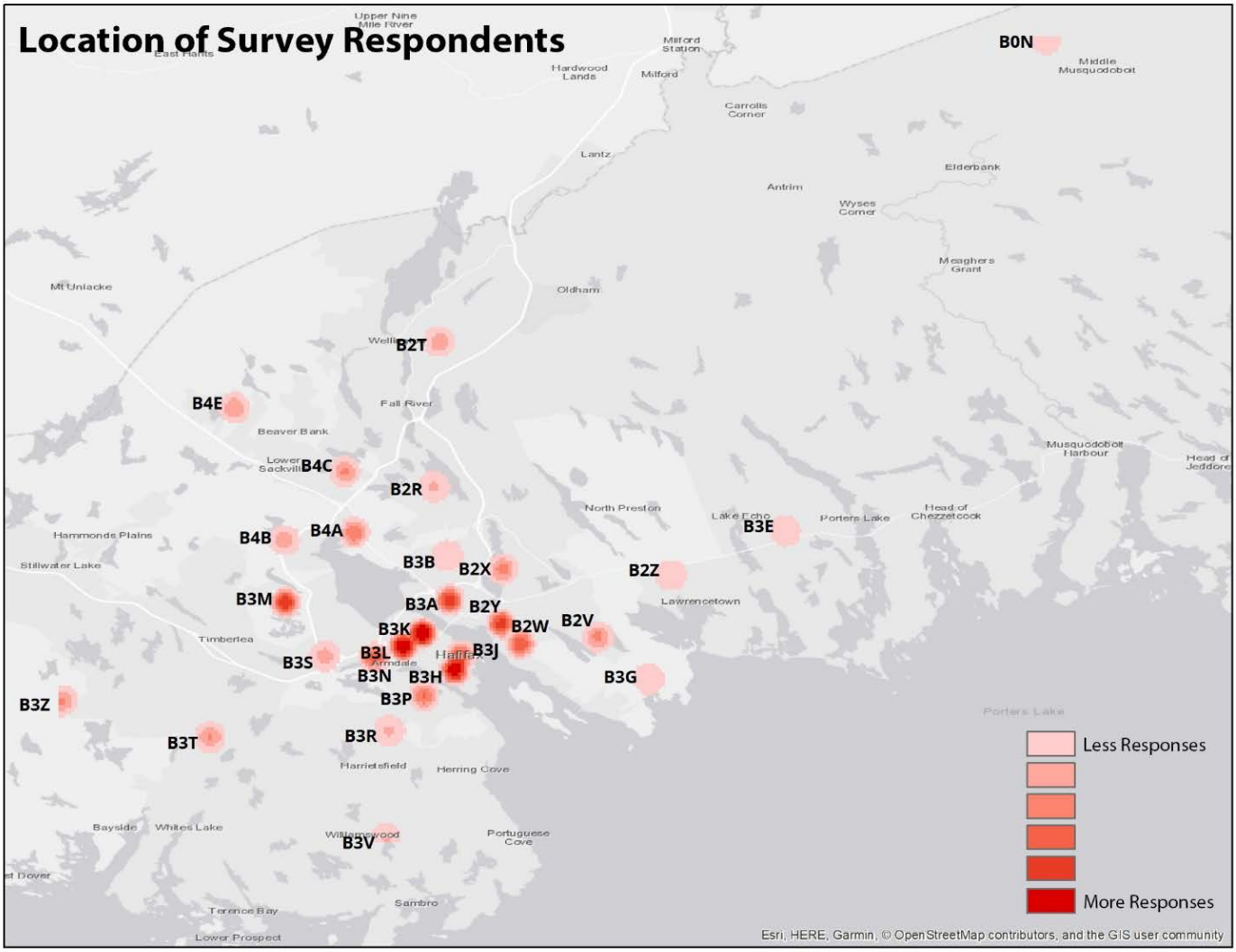

Figure 11: Location heatmap of survey respondents based on postal code

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

The project team engaged a large cross-section of different stakeholders in order to get a broad understanding of the implications of a shared micromobility system. Stakeholders include representatives from the following groups:

- Cycling advocates
- Local cycling industry
- Private operators
- Provincial departments (e.g. Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal)
- Halifax Regional Police
- Accessibility organizations (e.g. CNIB, HRM Office of Diversity and Inclusion)
- Local institutions (e.g. Dalhousie University)
- Business improvement districts
- HRM advisory committees (i.e.. Accessibility, Active Transportation)

Key Interview Themes

Stakeholders noted several key themes, which are summarized below.

Safety

- There was widespread concern about potential conflicts between shared micromobility users and pedestrians on sidewalks. Most people suggesed that micromobility vehicles should not be permitted on sidewalks or in high pedestrian volume areas.
- Some participants noted that the speed of shared bikes or e-scooters can be limited based on a geographic area.
- Others indicated that operating e-scooters on sidewalks may be preferable until such time that a larger active transportation network is completed.
- Most participants acknowledged that the mandatory helmet law in Nova Scotia was a major barrier to operating a shared micromobility system and indicated that any system would have to recognize that law. Many participants indicated that it is not enough for operators to have their users acknowledge that a helmet is required.
- Some participants identified potential liability for those injured from shared micromobility system as an issue that will need to be addressed.
- Education was described as an important tool to increase safety for bike share or e-scooter share users, pedestrians, and drivers.

Clarity of Rules

- Provincial staff indicated that e-scooters will be enabled as a vehicle type under the new Traffic Safety Act, but the provincial regulations for shared micromobility devices have not yet been developed.
    - *Note*: Until provincial regulations under the Traffic Safety Act are developed, the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) regulations are still in effect. HRM is seeking clarity from the Province regarding the legality of operating e-scooters on roads and/or sidewalks under the MVA, but so far the Province has not issued an official position on this matter.
- Many participants expressed the importance of obtaining clarity on where e-scooters and other micromobility devices can operate and with what requirements.
- Some participants expressed a desire for legislation and by-laws to include definitions of micromobility devices that are broad enough to allow for innovation and future types of shared micromobility vehicles.

Affordability, Equity, and Accessibility

- Participants indicated that the system should be affordable to people with low incomes, and accessible to those without credit cards.
- Some participants expressed a desire to have a wider range of shared vehicle types. Doing so could encourage use by people with a

wide range of abilities and ages. Examples of vehicles discussed during interviews included cargo bikes, tricycles, tandem bikes, recumbent bikes, hand-powered bikes, and three-wheeled scooters.

- Some participants were concerned about the accessibility of vendors' mobile apps, particularly with respect to people with low vision.
- Some participants expressed a desire to explore how the system might reduce barriers to physical activity, particularly for children going to and from school.
- Some of the operators indicated that some municipalities have used dynamic or incentive-based permitting to address specific concerns, such as allowing fleet increases if an operator provides service to an underserved or priority equity area.

Environment

- Some participants were concerned about the lifecycle costs of micromobility devices and their long-term greenhouse gas impacts.
- Some participants were concerned about the long-term impact of micromobility devices that are discarded into the harbour, such as impacts from battery leakage.
- Many participants questioned whether e-bikes and e-scooters would have a negative impact on active transportation goals by replacing cycling, walking, or rollingtrips.
- There was common desire among most participants to integrate shared micromobility with other modes, such as transit.

Service Area and Time of Operation

- Some participants expressed a desire to provide shared micromobility service in areas outside the Regional Centre, such as Spryfield and Clayton Park.
- There was widespread concern about operating a system in winter from the public sector, advocates, and industry/operators. Those in favour of a year-round system noted that the system could include winterized vehicles (e.g., wider tires).
- Many participants questioned whether there should be a larger network of active transportation facilities in place before proceeding with a shared micromobility system. Uncertainty surrounding where to permit e-scooter riding added to these concens.
- A minority of participants felt that the system would be used primarily by visitors. Most felt that residents would be the main user group.

Public Finances and Process

- Some participants had concerns about allowing a private operator to provide what may function as a public service. Participants raised concerns including

limited service coverage, cost, and ability to terminate the system without warning.

- There were some concerns about costs to the municipality, particularly long-term costs from a potentially bad contract, enforcement costs, or costs to operate a procured system.
- Some participants indicated that the permitting process could limit the number of scooter operators and the size of each operator's fleet in order to reduce the possibility of oversaturating the market.

Public Realm

- Many participants were concerned with the impact of parking areas for micromobility devices, with specific concern about the possibility of devices impeding the free flow of sidewalks.
- Some participants indicated that there are technological solutions to address orderly parking. These approaches include requiring users to take a photo after parking the vehicle or using geo-fencing to enforce parking in acceptable locations.
- Some participants discussed the need for a coordinated launch of any shared micromobility system. A smooth launch could help provide members of the public with a positive first impression.

Stakeholder Reactions to Vision Statement, Principles, and Goals

Interview participants shared widespread agreement with the proposed vision statement, principles, and goals developed by the project Steering Committee and the consultant team. Some stakeholders indicated that there were opportunities to continue collaborating with their respective organization on aspects related to shared micromobility.

The principles and goals aligned with some of the stakeholders' goals, such as reducing greenhouse gases, promoting active lifestyles, and providing additional mobility options. Many stakeholders also felt that access to shared micromobility would increase the use of active transportation facilities. This would then show a need to expand the low-stress active transportation infrastructure network. Others indicated that a shared micromobility system could provide an opportunity to collect anonymous data about transportation choices.

Participants who suggested revisions to the principles and goals emphasized the need for the services' affordability to users. Others expressed concern about the ability of bike share or e-scooter share to operate during winter.

For more information, please visit:

https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/shared-micromobility