

Party Bicycle Pilot Program

ISSUE

This report outlines the options for consideration to implement a pilot program to operate a party bicycle business in downtown Saskatoon, in the summer of 2021, and to consider future work related to party bicycle regulations.

BACKGROUND

History

Administration has been approached by a business intending to operate a party bicycle business with up to two party bicycles. Each party bicycle (see Appendix 1) would accommodate up to 17 people for the purposes of providing transportation between bars or pubs in the downtown area, on a daily basis, throughout the summer of 2021. The Pedal Pub business owners have provided Administration with a full overview of their operational plans (see Appendix 2). The business plans to operate both party bicycles on offsetting tour times, Monday to Thursday from 4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (weather permitting).

Party bicycles, sometimes referred to as pedal pubs, are multi-passenger bicycles usually accommodating eight or more riders and provide transportation services on roadways. Party bicycles can be used for a variety of purposes; however, they are commonly marketed to provide transportation on a predefined route. Configurations may vary between manufacturers and models; however, the typical arrangement includes an operator who steers the vehicle, with multiple people onboard pedaling. In jurisdictions that permit it, alcohol may be served on board.

A Transient Trader Business License was issued to the business confirming a specific commercial site to serve as a customer pick up and drop off point, as well as to store the party bicycle. The location for the pickup and drop off point is appropriately zoned for this type of use. This license does not imply permission to operate a party bicycle on public right of ways.

Current Status

As party bicycles are propelled by muscular power, provincial vehicle registration and insurance requirements do not apply. In the absence of provincial oversight on this type of vehicle, it falls within the purview of the City of Saskatoon to further regulate party bicycles through municipal bylaw.

City of Saskatoon's Current Approach

Neither *Bylaw No. 7200, the Traffic Bylaw*, nor *Bylaw 9705 - Bicycle Bylaw, 2020* contemplates a classification for large party bicycles to transport groups of people. By virtue of not being considered in the bylaw, there is no mechanism for regulating the use of party bicycles. The specifications will vary between different makes and models;

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however, a typical configuration for a party bicycle is similar in width and length to a half-ton pick up truck and estimated to travel 10-15 km per hour. A bike of this size is too large to operate in bike lanes or on walkways in parks.

Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

Administration has completed a cursory jurisdictional scan of other municipalities where party bicycles are currently operating.

OPTIONS

The Standing Policy Committee on Transportation may choose any of the three options, or a combination of Option 1 and Option 2.

Option 1 – Party Bicycle Pilot Program

Under this option, Administration will bring forward an interim bylaw amendment to the June City Council meeting to better assist in regulating these types of bicycles by explicitly prohibiting these types of bicycles, unless granted permission by the City (in this option, permission would be granted through a formal operating agreement).

Based on the findings of the jurisdictional review and research into safety considerations for party bicycles, Administration would engage with the proponent to enter into an operating agreement as a pilot program to regulate the operation of up to two party bicycles in the downtown area in the summer of 2021, with a plan to start as soon as approval is granted. The pilot program operating agreement would include conditions to address safety, such as head/tail and signal lights, warning systems such as a horn, passenger safety requirements, operating restrictions on certain streets and during certain times of the day, parking requirements, limits on the number of party bikes which may operate, as well other considerations for the integration of a slow-moving vehicle, such as this, into downtown traffic. To be in a position to regulate these types of party bicycles, Administration will also bring forward bylaw amendments to the June City Council meeting to both allow for Administrative approval of the party bicycle pilot program through an operating agreement, and to prohibit their operation unless otherwise approved.

The Traffic Bylaw would need to be amended to prohibit the operation of unregulated, oversized vehicles on streets and sidewalks within the City; and the *Bicycle Bylaw* would need to be amended to specifically exclude multi-passenger bicycles, such as those described in this report from the definition of “bicycle”.

Administration would report back following the conclusion of the pilot program with additional recommendations based on the information collected.

Advantages

- Allows the business to proceed with operations this summer.
- Ensures some consideration has been given to safe operations of this type of party bike on the public right of way.

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- Ensures there is a formal operating agreement in place to outline the conditions and requirements for safe operations.
- An interim bylaw change ensures clarity within the Traffic Bylaw and Bicycle Bylaw around the regulations of these types of “vehicles” on the public right of way.

Disadvantages

- There has not been sufficient time to fully research appropriate party bicycle regulations or undertake engagement with stakeholders and downtown businesses.
- Given the short timelines, there has been limited time to fully consider all aspects of safety concerns.
- There is limited awareness in the community about this type of business that would be granted permission to operate on public right of ways seven days per week throughout the summer.
- Unknown impacts to traffic flow on the planned route(s) for the pedal pub operations.

Option 2 – Research into Party Bicycle Regulations

Detailed regulations outlining operating requirements and bicycle specifications will ensure public safety for party bicycle users and the general public. Under this option, further review and research into the safety implications of party bicycles operating on public roadways will be used to draft appropriate bylaw amendments, developing a classification for this use, and to clarify the safety requirements for businesses to provide party bicycle service. If Option 1 is also selected, then, following the completion of the pilot program, Administration will review the outcome of the pilot program along with further research into the safety implications of party bicycles operating on public right of ways and bring forward appropriate bylaw amendments for consideration by City Council.

Advantages

- Provides a more thorough review of best practices from other jurisdictions and assessment of impacts within Saskatoon.
- Bylaws could then be updated to have the enabling language embedded, to no longer require a formal operating agreement to operate.
- There would be a more fulsome understanding of safety implications and considerations of party bicycles operating on the public right of way.
- Provides an opportunity for further engagement with stakeholders, downtown businesses and the broader community.

Disadvantages

- There is a time delay in being able to get this work done and would prohibit the operation of any party bicycles this summer.

Option 3 – Maintain the Current Approach

Under this option, party bicycles will continue to not be permitted to operate. The City Solicitor will prepare an amendment to the Traffic Bylaw and the Bicycle Bylaw to specifically state that these types of bicycles are prohibited from operating.

Advantages

- Ensures public safety by restricting party bicycles from operating on the public right of way.

Disadvantages

- Does not enable a business such as the Pedal Pub business to operate.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

1. That Option 1- Party Bicycle Pilot Program be approved and that the City Solicitor be directed to prepare bylaw amendments as set out in this report and to work with Transportation Department to prepare a formal operating agreement to enable a party bicycle pilot program, as outlined in Option 1; and
2. That Option 2 – Research into Party Bicycle Regulations be approved, to allow for further research and reporting on bylaw amendments to allow for the operation of party bicycles following the pilot program in 2021.

RATIONALE

Selecting Option 1 – Party Bicycle Pilot Program, and subsequently recommending to also undertake Option 2 – Research into Party Bicycle Regulations, will allow for the immediate creation of a pilot program to enable the operation of party bicycles this year while Administration undertakes further research and reporting to develop a classification for this use and permit their operation, following the pilot program.

With the appropriate regulations and routes in place, party bicycles will be able to safely operate on the public right of way.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Depending on the options selected, further research and reporting on considerations and implications of permitting party bicycles, including proposed bylaw amendments to accommodate this type of use would be undertaken. The work would require involvement of staff from multiple Divisions and Departments (Community Standards, Transportation and Solicitors). If the pilot program option were approved, the work would be undertaken after completion of the pilot project with reporting anticipated for the first quarter of 2022. Staff time is required, however additional funding would not be required to undertake the review or implement the pilot program.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

Should Transportation Committee unanimously approve the Administrative recommendations, Administration would immediately begin work with the business

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owner to confirm all safety requirements and terms of an operating agreement to be in the best position to begin business operations if approval is granted. Any further implications of permitting party bicycles would be identified as part of the review process and included in future reports.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Pending the direction of Committee and City Council, Administration would undertake to provide the applicable public communications such as public service announcements should the pilot program proceed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Party Bicycle Picture and Bike Specifications
2. Letter from Pedal Pub Business with Operational Overview
3. Confidential – Solicitor Client Privilege

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Mark Wilson, Licensing and Permitting Manager, Community Standards
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SP/2021/CS/Party Bicycle Pilot Program/jdw