



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services
Date: 9 April, 2024
Subject: Community E-bike Incentive Pilot Program – Final Findings
File No. 2950-20

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council receive the Community E-Bike Incentive Pilot Program – Final Findings Report for information; and
2. That Council direct staff to prepare a Union of British Columbia Municipalities resolution for Council's consideration, that requests the Province of BC to commit additional funding for continuation of the BC Electric Bike Incentive Program.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to provide relevant information, as per the UBC study on the Saanich Community E-Bike Incentive Pilot Program and Community Social Planning Council focus group feedback, supporting the continuation of a modified Saanich's e-bike incentive program and to secure council's direction for staff to prepare a Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) resolution for Council's consideration requesting the Province to continue the BC Electric Bike Incentive Program.

DISCUSSION

Saanich E-Bike Incentive Pilot Program Background

The Saanich Community E-bike Incentive Pilot Program ran from October 2021 to November 2022 and delivered on actions within the Saanich Climate Plan and Electric Mobility Strategy. It aimed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation through an equity-centered program that also delivered affordability co-benefits. The program provided a total of 389 incentives on the purchase of new e-bikes by Saanich residents for personal transportation, with majority of funding dedicated to larger incentives for lower income households. The program was supported by grant funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund (GMF) and was developed in collaboration with researchers at UBC's Research on Active Transportation (REACT) lab and the Community Social Planning Council (CSPC). More details regarding the Saanich Community E-Bike Incentive Program can be found online at saanich.ca/ebike.

The E-bike incentive pilot program was a first of its kind in BC and demonstrated considerable leadership by the District in addressing climate change. The pilot program was extremely

popular and there has been significant interest in the program by many municipalities across BC (and beyond) in addition to the Province and other jurisdictions. To determine the long-term value of a wider municipal or provincial e-bike incentive program, with funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), Saanich partnered with researchers at the UBC REACT Lab and a study was established to evaluate the pilot program.

A report on the interim UBC REACT Lab Study results was presented to Council at the February 13, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting. This included the initial results from the first two (of three) waves of the study. These interim results clearly demonstrated that the e-bike incentive pilot was successfully delivering against the program objectives. It had motivated new e-bike purchases and participants were using their e-bikes to replace vehicle trips. It demonstrated that incentives for e-bikes do succeed in reducing GHG emissions from personal transportation while delivering multiple co-benefits such as improved affordability and exercise levels. As a result of this report, Council approved \$130,000 as part of the 2023 budget to deliver a further 100 income qualified e-bike incentives. In addition, the District received a 2023 Climate and Energy award from the Community Energy Association for the e-bike incentive pilot program.

UBC REACT Lab Final Study Results

The study surveyed participants three times, once at or near e-bike purchase, once 3 months after purchase, and once 12 months after purchase. A summary of the study findings is included as [Attachment 1](#). The final report, "Travel Behaviour and Greenhouse Gas Impacts of the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program", is included as [Attachment 2](#) and is also publicly available online at reactlab.civil.ubc.ca/saanich-ebike-incentives.

The objectives of the UBC study were to determine:

- 1) The GHG mitigation impacts of e-bike adoption across different segments of the population; and
- 2) The cost-effectiveness of e-bike purchase incentives as a GHG mitigation strategy.

Key findings from the final study include:

- E-bikes were used frequently.
- E-bike incentive purchasers reduced vehicle use and GHG emissions.
- E-bikes were more effective at reducing driving than conventional bikes.
- Incentives prompted new climate-friendly behaviours that would not have occurred without the incentives.
- Centering income equity in design improved effectiveness.
- High satisfaction rates were achieved.
- Participation by households with children was achieved.
- Vehicle ownership remained steady while GHGs from vehicle trips shrank due to substitution of e-bike trips for vehicle trips.
- The program delivered multiple co-benefits.
- The program delivered cost-competitive GHG savings.
- The program exceeded predicted savings of GHGs and vehicle kilometers travelled (VKT).

CSPC Focus Group Results

In addition to the UBC study, Saanich worked with the CSPC to gather qualitative feedback from participants through a series of focus groups. This was part of the CSPC's Transportation ACES (Access, Climate, and Economic Security) initiative funded by the Vancouver Foundation. Qualitative research can complement quantitative research and allows the research subjects to

express themselves and their perspectives in more open-ended formats than quantitative research can, further informing future program improvements. Overall feedback was positive about the pilot program and the benefits the e-bikes brought to participants' transportation experience. The focus group process and results are provided in [Attachment 3](#).

Saanich top-up to the Provincial E-bike Rebate program

Saanich staff engaged provincial staff from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) throughout the design, development and implementation of the Saanich e-bike incentive program. The intention was to share findings and seek opportunities to collaborate on a potential future provincial e-bike incentive program.

On June 1, 2023, the Provincial BC Electric Bike Rebate Program was launched, providing more than \$6 million in funding across approximately 9,000 people in BC for e-bike incentives. The program was heavily informed by the District of Saanich E-Bike Incentive Pilot Program, demonstrating the considerable value of Saanich's climate leadership.

As outlined in a May 5, 2023 memo to Council, the Saanich e-bike program was paused during the 2023 Provincial program intake. The Province provided an opportunity for municipalities to leverage the provincial program, and provide a top-up fund without those communities needing to design and launch their own program. There was a very quick turn-around to opt-into this top-up opportunity, and Saanich dedicated \$30,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund (CARF) to pilot this approach. This smaller amount enabled us to test the impact of the top-up incentives and also access data and reporting specific to the provincial rebates allocated to Saanich residents.

The BC program was very popular, and funding was very quickly reserved. A total of 238 provincial rebates have been paid out to Saanich residents through the BC E-bike Rebate Program (including Saanich top-up) as of the Jan 29, 2024 report provided by the program administrator SCRAP-IT. The value of the incentives received by Saanich residents was approximately \$306,150, including the District's contribution.

Overall the following incentives were distributed:

- 17 x \$350 incentive
- 23 x \$1,000 incentive
- 198 x \$1,400 incentive

Researchers with UBC REACT Lab have also partnered with MOTI to study the impacts of the Provincial program given the broader geographical reach and differences between the two programs. An interim report on the study of the BC E-bike Rebate program impacts is anticipated in mid-2024 with a final report anticipated in late 2025.

Next Steps

The UBC Study results clearly demonstrate that the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program has been extremely successful in delivering or exceeding the program objectives. Therefore, staff will deliver a 2024 intake of the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program, utilizing the \$130,000 Council approved as part of the 2023 budget, to deliver a further approximately 100 income qualified e-bike incentives. The program will also incorporate lessons learned from the previous Saanich and Provincial E-bike Incentive Programs. Staff will submit a final report to FCM who provided funding to support the pilot program, and will seek opportunities to share our findings through presentations, interviews, and additional award applications.

Staff have continued to engage with MOTI staff to determine if there will be an upcoming intake of the provincial BC E-Bike incentive program but have not heard that an intake will occur in 2024. As the UBC results for the provincial program are evaluated, Saanich staff will continue to advocate for future funding and incentive intakes, including drafting a Union of British Columbia (UBCM) resolution to this effect for Council's consideration.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That Council approves the recommendations as outlined in the Staff Report.
2. That Council not approve the recommendations as outlined in the Staff Report.
3. That Council provide alternate direction to staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. The 2024 Saanich E-bike Incentive Program intake will utilize \$130,000 in funding carried over from the 2023 budget.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Providing top up incentives to a Provincial E-bike Rebate program will help achieve the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Climate Action and Environmental Leadership goal, specifically initiatives:

- 1.3 We implement innovative solutions and practices to reduce emissions, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and protect the environment;
- 2.1 Diversity, equity, inclusion and respect will guide our decisions;
- 4.1 We build a culture to support sustainable transportation; and
- 4.2 We achieve a significant shift to active modes of transportation to reduce vehicle trips.

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of the final UBC REACT Lab study on the impacts of the award-winning Saanich E-bike Incentive Program, the results from the CSPC focus groups and outcomes from the Saanich top-up of the BC E-bike Rebate Program. The UBC study results clearly demonstrate that the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program has been extremely successful. As a result, staff will deliver a 2024 intake of the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program for income qualified incentive streams only, utilizing the \$130,000 previously committed funds. Staff will continue to advocate to the Province for additional funding for future BC E-Bike Incentive program intakes and are seeking Council direction to draft a Union of British Columbia (UBCM) resolution to this effect for Council's consideration.

Prepared by:



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Sustainability Planner

Reviewed by:



Rebecca Newlove
Manager of Sustainability

Approved by:



Sheila Allen
Director of Corporate Services

Attachments:

1. Summary of UBC REACT Lab Study on the Saanich E-bike Incentive Program
2. UBC REACT Lab Travel Behaviour and GHG Impacts of the Saanich E-Bike Incentive Program Final Report, March 2024
3. Saanich E-bike Incentive Pilot Program Focus Group Results

ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Sustainability & Strategic Initiatives.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer