Mode choice, substitution patterns and environmental impacts of shared and personal micro-mobility

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Paper presented at the *21st Swiss Transport Research Conference* (STRC), Ascona, September.

Abstract

Shared micro-mobility services are rapidly expanding yet little is known about travel behaviour. Understanding mode choice, in particular, is quintessential for incorporating micro-mobility into transport simulations in order to enable effective transport planning. We contribute by collecting a large dataset with matching GPS tracks, booking data and survey data for more than 500 travellers, and by estimating a first choice model between eight transport modes, including shared e-scooters, shared e-bikes, personal e-scooters and personal e-bikes. We find that trip distance, precipitation and access distance are fundamental to micro-mobility mode choice. Substitution patterns reveal that personal e-scooters and e-bikes emit less CO_2 than the transport modes they replace, while shared e-scooters and e-bikes emit more CO_2 than the transport modes they replace. Our results enable researchers and planners to test the effectiveness of policy interventions through transport simulations. Service providers can use our findings on access distances to optimize vehicle repositioning.

Keywords: e-scooters, e-bikes, micro-mobility, competition, mode choice, environmental impact

Cite as: Reck, D.J., H. Martin and K.W. Axhausen (2021) Mode choice, substitution patterns and environmental impacts of shared and personal micro-mobility, Paper presented at the *21st Swiss Transport Research Conference* (STRC), Ascona, September.

1. Introduction

The usage of shared micro-mobility services has greatly increased in recent years. This development is perhaps best documented in the USA, where 35M rides were recorded in 2017, 84M rides in 2018 and 136M rides in 2019 (NACTO, 2020). Many shared micro-mobility companies have since expanded around the globe and now offer their services in North American, European, Asian and Australian metropolises. In addition to the investor-led diffusion of shared micro-mobility services, the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the diffusion of personal micro-mobility as alternatives to other means of commute.

Given their rapid diffusion, effective regulation and integrated transport planning of micro-mobility vehicles and services is pertinent. City administrations are further asking how micro-mobility can contribute to increasingly stringent CO_2 reduction targets. Advances in these directions, however, are hindered by our limited understanding of travel behaviour. Most importantly, we do not yet comprehensively understand mode choice between shared micro-mobility services and more established modes (e.g., public transport, private cars). Closing this gap is paramount: mode choice is one of the four essential 'ingredients' to conventional transport planning. Furthermore, mode choice models reveal competition and substitution patterns[1] that enable determination of the net environmental impact of shared micro-mobility services more precisely than survey-based methods. In the words of Ortúzar and Willumsen (2011: 207), "the issue of mode choice is probably the single most important element in transport planning and policy making".

The scope of the existing empirical literature on shared micro-mobility services strongly varies by mode. While travel behaviour with shared bikes is relatively well understood (e.g., Fishman et al., 2013; Ricci, 2015; Fishman, 2016; Teixeira et al., 2021), the literature on shared

[1] We find the following definition of modal substitution by Wang et al. (2021: 4) useful: "Modal substitution means that a certain number of trips made by a new mode of travel displace trips that would have been made by an existing mode; users substitute the new mode for an existing one (e.g. e-scooter substitutes for walking)."

e-bikes is more limited (e.g., Campbell et al., 2016; Guidon et al., 2019; He et al., 2019). Shared e-scooters are the latest addition to the micro-mobility mix and researchers have only recently begun to analyse them (e.g., Christoforou et al., 2021; McKenzie, 2019; Noland, 2021; Wang et al., 2021, Younes et al., 2020). Most studies analyse patterns in user characteristics or trip characteristics of a single mode, or compare data on different modes. While they provide valuable indications on factors influencing the choice of a single mode, they cannot explain their relative influence in choice situations between multiple competing modes. To the best of our knowledge, only one study has previously estimated a mode choice model between several shared micro-mobility services (Reck et al., 2021a). That study's use for integrated transport planning is limited, however, as it includes neither public transport and private modes, nor user characteristics.

We contribute by estimating the first mode choice model that includes shared micro-mobility services (e-scooters and e-bikes), public transport, private modes (bike, car, e-bike, e-scooter) and walking, as well as user characteristics. To do so, we conducted a large-scale empirical study with 540 participants in Zurich, Switzerland. For each participant, we collected three months of GPS traces through a smartphone app, booking data for rides conducted with shared micro-mobility services, and socio-demographic information through two surveys. Additionally, we collected GPS points of all available shared micro-mobility vehicles in Zurich at a five-minute interval for the same period through the providers' APIs (48M GPS points). We then matched all trips (65K) with selected contextual information (e.g., weather, available vehicles in close vicinity), user characteristics and non-chosen alternatives, and estimated mode choice using a mixed logit model. Finally, we demonstrate the practical utility of the model by deriving precise, distance-based substitution rates for shared micro-mobility services and their privately-owned counterparts, and by calculating their net environmental impacts.

This paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we review the literature on shared micro-mobility mode choice. In Section 3, we introduce our data and the empirical context of our study. We develop the methodology, estimate the choice model and present the results in Section 4. In Section 5, we use the estimated model to derive substitution rates and to calculate the net environmental impacts of shared and personal e-bikes and e-scooters. We conclude with a discussion of the results and their implications for research, policy and practice in Section 6.

2. Literature review

This section introduces the key results of previous studies on shared micro-mobility services. We focus on aspects that are hypothesized to influence mode choice, such as user and household characteristics as well as trip and context characteristics. This literature review both aims to synthesize general patterns that are found to hold across all shared micro-mobility services, as well as highlight differences between individual services to inform subsequent model specification.

Users of shared micro-mobility services are typically young, university-educated males often with full-time employment and few to no children and cars in their households (NACTO, 2020; Reck and Axhausen; 2021; Shaheen and Cohen, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Users of shared e-bikes, in particular, also include a higher shares of middle age groups (He et al., 2019) while users of shared e-scooters appear to be particularly young (NACTO, 2020; Reck and Axhausen, 2021; Sanders et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Income distributions, in particular for shared e-scooter users, vary by region, but generally correspond to the regional median income (NACTO, 2020; Reck and Axhausen, 2021). Vehicle ownership appears to correlate with shared vehicle usage, i.e. those who own e-scooters/e-bikes are more likely to use shared e-scooters/e-bikes as well (Fishman et al., 2013; Reck and Axhausen, 2021; Shaheen et al., 2011).

Trips with shared micro-mobility services are shorter than with other motorized modes of transport (e.g., private cars, public transport). Shared e-scooters, for example, are used for short distances and most frequently in central business districts or near universities (Bai and Jiao, 2020; Caspi et al., 2020; Hawa et al., 2021; Reck et al., 2021b; Zuniga-Garcia and Machemehl, 2020). Shared e-bikes are used for longer distances than e-scooters or regular bikes, often uphill (Du et al., 2019; Guidon et al., 2019; Guidon et al., 2020; He et al., 2019; Lazarus et al., 2020; MacArthur et al., 2014; Reck et al., 2021b; Shen et al., 2018; Younes et al., 2020). Precipitation and low temperatures negatively influence the usage of all shared micro-mobility services (El-Assi et al., 2017; Gebhart and Noland, 2014; Noland, 2019; Noland, 2021; Zhu et al., 2020). The evidence on use by time of day for shared e-scooters is inconclusive: some studies find evidence of two commuting peaks (Caspi et al., 2020; McKenzie, 2019), others only find single afternoon usage peaks (Bai and Jiao, 2020; Mathew et al., 2019; Reck et al., 2021b; Younes et al., 2020). In comparison to shared docked bikes, commuting use of shared e-scooters seems to be less pronounced (McKenzie, 2019; Reck et al., 2021a; Younes et al., 2020). Finally, vehicle access distance appears to influence usage (Christoforou et al., 2021).

The above studies provide valuable indications on factors influencing the choice of a single shared micro-mobility mode. However, they cannot explain the relative influence of factors in choice situations between multiple competing modes. To the best of our knowledge, only one study has previously estimated mode choice models between several shared micro-mobility services based on revealed preference data. Reck et al. (2021a) collected trip-level data of four different shared micro-mobility modes in Switzerland and estimated a matching mode choice model. Findings include that shared micro-mobility mode choice is dominated by distance, elevation rise, and time of day. While docked (e-)bikes are preferred for longer distances and during commuting times, dockless e-scooters are preferred for shorter distances and during the night. The density of available vehicles at the point of departure further influences mode choice (this effect is strongest for dockless fleets). Two key limitations of this study are that it does not include other transport modes (e.g., public transport, private cars) nor user characteristics. Thus, the model cannot be used to incorporate shared micro-mobility services into transport simulations, which is key to effective, integrated transport planning.

We contribute by collecting a first comprehensive dataset that includes revealed preference data on trips conducted with different shared micro-mobility services (e-scooters, e-bikes), public transport, private modes (bike, car, e-bike, e-scooter) and walking, and by estimating a mode choice model between all eight transport modes.

3. Data

3.1. Location and recruitment

Our study is conducted in Zurich, which is Switzerland's largest city with 403K inhabitants in the city and 1.5M inhabitants in the metropolitan area. Zurich has a high trip-level public transport mode share of 41% according to the latest Swiss mobility census (MZMV, 2015). The share of trips conducted with private cars has been declining steadily over the past years from 40% in 2000 to 25% in 2015. The remaining trips are conducted with active modes (walking: 26%, (e-) bikes: 8%). Several micro-mobility companies operate in Zurich making it a suitable place to study their usage. They include docked (e-)bikes (Publibike), dockless e-bikes (Bond) and dockless e-scooters (e.g., Lime, Bird, Tier, Voi).

Data collection began in June 2020. The cantonal statistical office sent invitations to participate in our mobility study to 10 000 randomly selected inhabits of Zurich municipality of age 18 to 65. The study included two surveys and three months of GPS smartphone tracking. Respondents were offered an incentive of 90 CHF[2] for their participation. All invitation letters

[2] 1 CHF = 1.08 USD at the time of writing (29 June 2021).

included detailed information on the purpose of the study and the methods to collect and process the data in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation. The study design was reviewed and approved by the university's Ethics Committee without reservations.

A total of 1 277 people returned the first survey between June and July 2020. The resulting response rate of 12.7% is well in the expected range for a survey with a considerable response burden of 643 points (Schmid and Axhausen, 2019). Only respondents who completed the first questionnaire were invited to participate in the subsequent GPS tracking and the final survey. A total of 540 (6%) respondents completed the entire study and their data is used for the analyses in this paper. The subsequent subsections introduce each data source (survey, GPS tracks, booking records, contextual data) and discuss the representativeness of our sample.

3.2. Data sources

We designed two online surveys that include a total of 171 questions to elicit socio-demographic and mobility-related information. All questions and answer categories were formulated to be equal to the latest available Swiss mobility census to enable direct comparison. Documentation in English[3] and questionnaires in German[4] and French[5] are available online. The surveys were structured into the following three blocks:

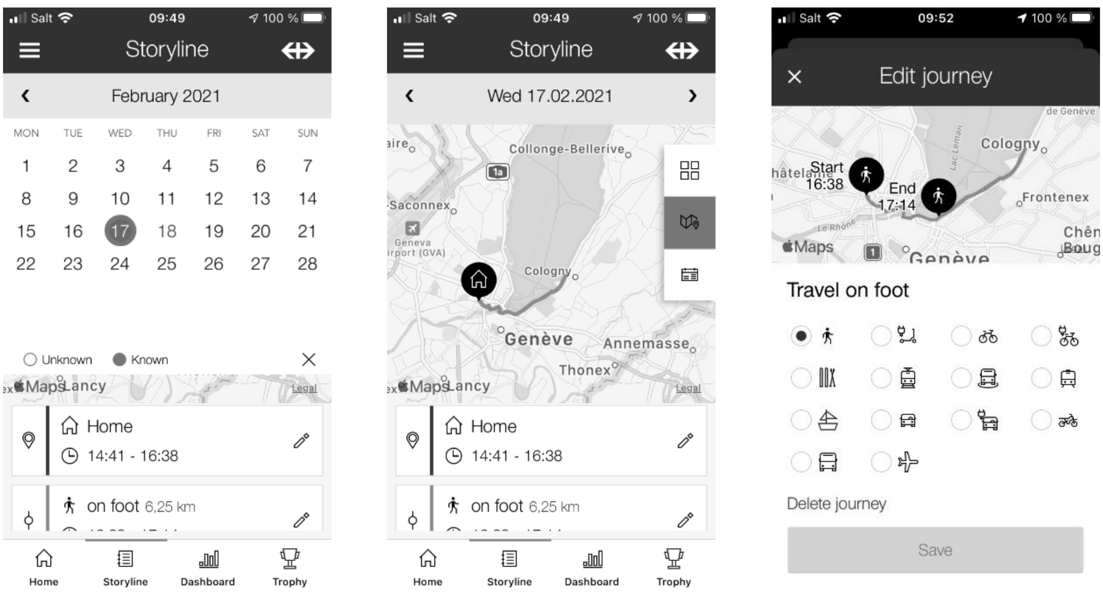
- person-specific socio-demographic questions (e.g., year of birth, gender, educational attainment, current occupation),
- household-specific socio-demographic questions (e.g., number of adults and children, monthly income, mobility tool ownership), and

[3] https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/mobility/data/mtmc.html
[4] https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/mobilitaet-verkehr/erhebungen/mzmv.assetdetail.5606052.html
[5] https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/mobilite-transports/enquetes/mzmv.assetdetail.5606053.html

- person-specific mobility questions (e.g., public season ticket ownership, travel priorities, knowledge of and membership in shared (micro-) mobility schemes, frequency of use, access to shared micro-mobility services at home and work).

The smartphone app ‘MyWay’ (available in app stores) was used for GPS tracking. The app passively collects GPS traces, identifies trips and infers the transport mode used based on a comparison with public transport timetables and past user mode choice. Each day, the app presents users with a summary of their realized trips and allows retrospective editing of transport modes. Figure 1 gives a visual impression of the user interface. Overall, we collected 65 716 trips for 540 respondents with this method, which further divide into 17 004 public transport trips, 16 211 car trips, 15 393 walking trips, 14 246 bike trips, 2 537 e-bike trips, and 345 e-scooter trips.

Figure 1 GPS tracking app on iPhone SE (left: calendar view, middle: map view, right: edit mode view).



We further received booking data for all shared micro-mobility trips booked by our participants during the study duration through a new intermodal journey planning app ‘yumuv’ (available in app stores), which was launched by Swiss Federal Railways in June 2020. Matching these booking records with the GPS tracks allowed us to differentiate private from shared micro-mobility trips. Out of the total of 2 537 e-bike trips, 287 had matching booking records and were hence labelled as shared e-bike trips. Out of the total of 345 e-scooter trips, 121 had matching booking records.

Finally, we added contextual data to each trip. This includes weather data (openly available in ten-minute intervals for Zurich), as well as the distance to the next available shared micro-mobility vehicle at the beginning of each trip. In order to compute the latter, Swiss Federal Railways records the locations of all shared micro-mobility vehicles in Zurich in five-minute intervals through the providers’ APIs.

3.3. Representativeness

We compare the characteristics of our sample to the latest censuses to investigate its representativeness. The latest available censuses are the 2018 “Strukturdatenerhebung” (SE) and the 2015 mobility census “Mikrozensus Mobilität und Verkehr” (MZMV). While the former is more current, the latter includes substantially more information on mobility-related topics.

Table 1 shows the resulting comparison. Our sample is slightly younger (mean: 38 years) than the respondents of both previous censuses (2015: 42 years, 2018: 41 years). It further includes slightly fewer females (46%) than previous censuses (2015: 50%, 2018: 51%). The three successive surveys (2015, 2018, 2020) further show two larger societal trends: an increasing share of respondents holding a tertiary degree (2015: 49%, 2018: 58%, 2020: 76%) and an increasing share of respondents in full-time employment (2015: 63%, 2018: 68%, 2020:

81%). In line, the mean monthly household income increased from 2015 (~9,000 CHF) to 2020 (~10,000 CHF). The household structure further exhibits a trend towards single/dual adult households (2015: 71%, 2018: 84%, 2020: 85%) without children (2015: 62%, 2018: 70%, 2020: 73%). Households in our sample owned slightly fewer cars and slightly more bikes and e-bikes compared to the 2015 census. They further owned slightly more nationwide and therefore slightly fewer local public transport season tickets.

Table 1 Comparison of survey respondents and recent censuses. All values in %.

	This survey	Census (SE)	Census (MZMV)
Year	2020	2018	2015
N (Zurich municipality only)	540	7808	809
Filtered for age groups	18-65	18-65	18-65
Person-specific attributes			
Age			
18-20	0	3	2
21-30	26	20	16
31-40	38	31	28
41-50	23	22	25
51-60	8	18	21
61-65	5	7	8
Female	46	50	51
Education (tertiary degree)	76	58	49
Full-time employed	81	68	63
PT season ticket ownership			
Nation-wide	19	n/a	16
Local (Zurich)	38	n/a	43
Household-specific attributes			
Monthly income			
4,000 CHF and below	17	n/a	11
4,001 CHF – 8,000 CHF	21	n/a	35
8,001 CHF – 12,000 CHF	23	n/a	26
12,001 CHF – 16,000 CHF	25	n/a	14
16,000 CHF and above	13	n/a	14
Children			
0	73	70	62
1	12	14	17
2 and above	15	15	20
Adults			
1	26	28	15
2	62	56	56
3 and above	12	15	29
Cars			
0	46	n/a	45
1	45	n/a	43
2 and above	9	n/a	11
Bikes			
0	16	n/a	19
1	20	n/a	25
2 and above	63	n/a	56
E-bikes			
0	86	n/a	95
1	10	n/a	4
2 and above	4	n/a	1
E-Scooters			
0	97	n/a	n/a
1	3	n/a	n/a
2 and above	0	n/a	n/a

4. Mode choice

In this section, we estimate the mode choice model and present the results.

4.1. Method

We first generate the choice sets by complementing each of the 65 716 observed trips in our GPS tracking data with the data for the non-chosen alternatives. For each observed trip, we calculate the non-chosen alternatives with the agent-based transport simulation software MATSim (Horni et al., 2016). The MATSim Zurich scenario has been used extensively in transport planning research (e.g., Balac et al., 2019; Becker et al., 2020; Hörl et al., 2021; Manser et al., 2020) and provides reliable attribute values for the non-chosen alternatives. Due to reasons described earlier, MATSim is limited to public transport, private cars, private bikes and walking. While we can safely assume that e-bikes and e-scooters are used on the same routes as private bikes (thus, distances of these alternatives are equal), travel times are likely to differ. Thus, we constrain our models to use distance parameters only and exclude travel time parameters.

In addition to trip-specific attributes (distance, access distance, transfers, elevation, time of day), we include weather (precipitation, wind) and a number of binary person-specific attributes that have previously been hypothesized to influence micro-mobility mode choice. These include public transport season ticket ownership (local, nation, bundle[6]), the number of vehicles in the household (cars, bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters), age, gender, university education and employment status. Prices were not included in this choice model as they are heavily correlated with distances for many transport modes such as private cars, shared e-scooters and shared e-bikes, and their inclusion would thus lead to multicollinearity issues. For example, the

[6] Transport bundles sold in Zurich during the time of study included a local public transport season ticket and a 60-minute monthly allowance for shared micro-mobility services.

shared e-bike operator in Zurich charges an unlocking fee of 1 CHF and an additional per-kilometre fee of 1 CHF. Table 2 summarizes all attributes used for subsequent model estimation.

Table 2 Attributes used for model estimation (trip-level statistics).

Attribute	Unit	Min.	1st Qu.	Med.	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Trip-specific attributes							
Distance	km	0.01	1.35	3.01	4.15	5.60	80.28
Access distance[1]							
PT	km	0.01	0.29	0.42	0.45	0.56	4.30
Shared e-bike[2]	km	0.00	0.13	0.22	0.23	0.33	0.50
Shared e-scooter[2]	km	0.00	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.50
Transfers	count	0	0	1	1	1	4
Elevation	km	-0.47	-0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.47
Morning (6am – 9am)	binary	0	0	0	0	0	1
Night (9pm – 5am)	binary	0	0	0	0	0	1
Weather							
Precipitation	mm/h	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.05	6.14
Wind speed	m/s	1.22	3.56	4.73	5.26	6.19	18.68
Person-specific attributes							
PT season ticket (local)	binary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	1.00	1.00
PT season ticket (nation)	binary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00	1.00
PT season ticket (bundle)	binary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	1.00
Cars in household	count	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.64	1.00	5.00
Bikes in household	count	0.00	1.00	2.00	2.25	3.00	6.00
E-bikes in household	count	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00	3.00
E-scooters in household	count	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	2.00
Age	years	19	30	36	38	45	65
Female	binary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.46	1.00	1.00
University education	binary	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.74	1.00	1.00
Full-time employment	binary	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.69	1.00	1.00

[1] access distance is only defined for public transport and shared micro-mobility services.
[2] when available.

In order to account for taste heterogeneity in mode choice between individuals, we choose a mixed logit model in panel specification[7] and include random alternative-specific constants (Hensher and Greene, 2003; McFadden and Train, 2000). We built and estimated the model

[7] The repeated choice nature of panel data is recognized by Apollo and probabilities across individual choice observations for each individual are multiplied (Hess and Palma, 2019).

iteratively (i.e., dropping insignificant and insubstantial variables) to obtain the most parsimonious model possible that simultaneously allows for cross-modal comparisons. Note that the final model includes four non-linear variables: a squared term for trip distance and interaction terms between trip distance and precipitation, elevation and wind speed. For model estimation, we used maximum likelihood with 500 MLHS[8] draws in the R package Apollo (Hess and Palma, 2019). Appendix 1 shows the utility functions.

Finally, we set the availabilities. For each person, we verify if each transport mode was used at least once during the three months. If not, we set the availability of the respective transport mode to zero for all trips of that person, i.e. remove it from the choice set for this person. Further, we set the availability of shared e-scooters, shared e-bikes and public transport to zero for each trip where no vehicle was detected within a 500m radius or no public transport connection was found.

4.2. Results

Table 3 displays the estimation results. The mixed logit model has an excellent fit with an adjusted rho-square value of 0.44. In comparison to the reference mode (walking), trip distance substantially and significantly influences mode choice for all other modes. Precipitation positively influences mode choice for public transport and cars, and negatively for all micro-mobility modes, most so for shared e-bikes and e-scooters. Elevation and wind speed further negatively influence mode choice for non-electric bikes.

One perhaps surprising result concerns the penalty of the access distance for public transport and shared e-bikes and e-scooters. Access distance for shared e-scooters is penalized substantially more (-6.16) than access distance for public transport and shared e-bikes (-2.31

[8] MLHS draws avoid undesirable correlation patterns that arise when standard Halton sequences are used for several variables (Hess et al., 2006).

and -2.36, respectively)[9]. Users of shared e-scooters are willing to walk an average of 60m and a maximum of 210m to access a vehicle, while users of shared e-bikes are willing to walk an average of 200m and up to 490m to access a vehicle. Public transport users are willing to walk even longer (average: 400m) to reach their preferred stop. We offer two explanations for this behaviour. First, shared e-scooters are used for substantially shorter distances than both other modes. Hence, a 200m access distance relative to the overall trip distance is substantially more for shared e-scooters and thus presents a greater relative burden. Second, shared e-scooters cannot be pre-reserved in Zurich. The longer the access distance, the more uncertainty in availability users face. For public transport real-time information about vehicle locations is available through major trip planning apps (e.g., Google Maps or the city's public transport app) and Zurich's shared e-bikes can be pre-reserved for up to ten minutes.

Several further parameter estimates show the expected results and are thus only briefly mentioned here. For public transport, season tickets positively influence mode choice while transfers negatively influence mode choice. The transport bundle further positively influences mode choice for shared e-scooters. Vehicles ownership positively influences mode choice for each respective mode. Time of day is significant at a 95% confidence level only for personal e-bikes and shared e-scooters, positively influencing mode choice during the morning commute (6am – 9am) for personal e-bikes and mode choice during the night (9pm – 5am) for shared e-scooters. Most socio-demographic parameter estimates are insignificant at a 95% confidence level, except for full-time employment, which positively influences mode choice for shared e-bikes.

[9] Additional saturation effects of the density of shared micro-mobility fleets were not found.

Table 3 Estimation results (mixed logit model).

	PT		Car		Bike		E-Bike (personal)		E-Bike (shared)		E-Scooter (personal)		E-Scooter (shared)	
	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.	Coef.	t.rat.
ASC (μ)	-3.97	-58.57	-5.40	-43.34	-3.47	-44.60	-4.73	-25.39	-5.52	-7.97	-4.85	-13.34	-4.35	-7.88
ASC (σ)	-1.16	-45.41	-1.56	-42.84	-1.64	-41.59	-1.47	-17.00	-1.53	-8.29	1.51	11.16	0.36	2.08
Distance	2.09	106.27	1.94	72.79	1.63	67.15	1.74	43.67	2.26	17.51	1.62	9.68	1.32	11.38
Distance * Distance	-0.04	-46.93	-0.03	-40.96	-0.03	-24.70	-0.03	-13.59	-0.09	-5.84	-0.07	-2.85	-0.02	-1.65
Distance * Precipitation	0.75	4.21	0.74	4.09	-0.74	-3.96	-0.79	-2.86	-4.13	-3.00	-0.58	-0.84	-4.27	-1.64
Distance * Elevation					-0.15	-3.59								
Distance * Wind speed					-0.61	-4.73								
Access distance	-2.31	-35.46							-2.36	-1.95			-6.16	-2.89
PT transfer	-0.64	-29.23												
Morning (6am – 9am)							0.34	4.43	-0.18	-0.72	0.59	2.26	0.23	0.83
Night (9pm – 5am)							-0.15	-1.32	-0.31	-1.09	0.91	3.57	0.35	1.23
Vehicles in household			1.13	23.62	0.18	8.37	1.53	20.83			4.99	11.75		
PT season ticket (local)	0.93	14.13												
PT season ticket (nation)	0.91	7.65												
PT season ticket (bundle)	0.31	4.45							-0.32	-1.12			1.80	7.92
Age									0.02	0.55			-0.01	-0.65
Female									0.55	0.65			-0.74	-1.70
University education									0.05	0.05			-0.18	-0.50
Full-time employment									1.49	2.61			0.51	1.53
Number of individuals	540													
Number of observations	65 716													
Adj. Rho-square	0.44													

5. Substitution patterns and environmental implications

In this section, we first utilize the estimated choice model to derive substitution patterns[10] for each micro-mobility mode. Using these substitution patterns, we then calculate net CO_2 emissions.

5.1. Substitution patterns

Methodologically, only a slight adaption to the above choice model is necessary to derive substitution patterns. We take the subsets of trips conducted with e-scooters and e-bikes and set the availability for each mode, when chosen, from one to zero. We then apply our model to the subset of trips with adjusted availabilities to predict alternative mode choice. Conceptually, this predicted alternative mode is equal to what is commonly described as a substituted mode, i.e. the mode that would have been chosen if the chosen mode had not been available. Using the new predictions, we can calculate average substitution rates for e-scooters and e-bikes on a trip-level and on a km-level. For the trip-level, we divide the number of trips with a particular substituted mode (e.g., public transport) by the total number of trips conducted with the micro-mobility mode (e.g., shared e-scooters). For the km-level, we divide the total distance with a particular substituted mode by the total distance with the micro-mobility mode.

The resulting substitution patterns are shown in Table 4. We observe that personal e-bikes replace trips conducted with all four main modes (walk, PT, car, bike), while shared e-bikes replace substantially fewer car trips and more PT and bike trips. While personal e-scooters

[10] Substitution patterns (or 'substitution rates') can also be elicited with surveys, i.e. by asking participants about their last trip and their alternative mode choice. Indeed, this approach is much more common than the choice model approach developed here. The latter, however, has one key advantage over the former: it allows to calculate precise, distance-based substitution patterns. These are more adequate for estimating environmental implications than trip-based substitution patterns stemming from surveys for three reasons. First, it is substituted distance and not substituted trips that matters when calculating environmental implications. Second, substitution patterns derived from choice models are valid for all trips, not just the ones explicitly asked for, as they build on user preferences. Third, substitution patterns derived from choice models are more reliable than those derived from stated preference surveys, which are prone to biases such as the recall bias or the social desirability bias. Hence, we chose to proceed with the choice model approach instead of detailing the results from survey data, which we also elicited.

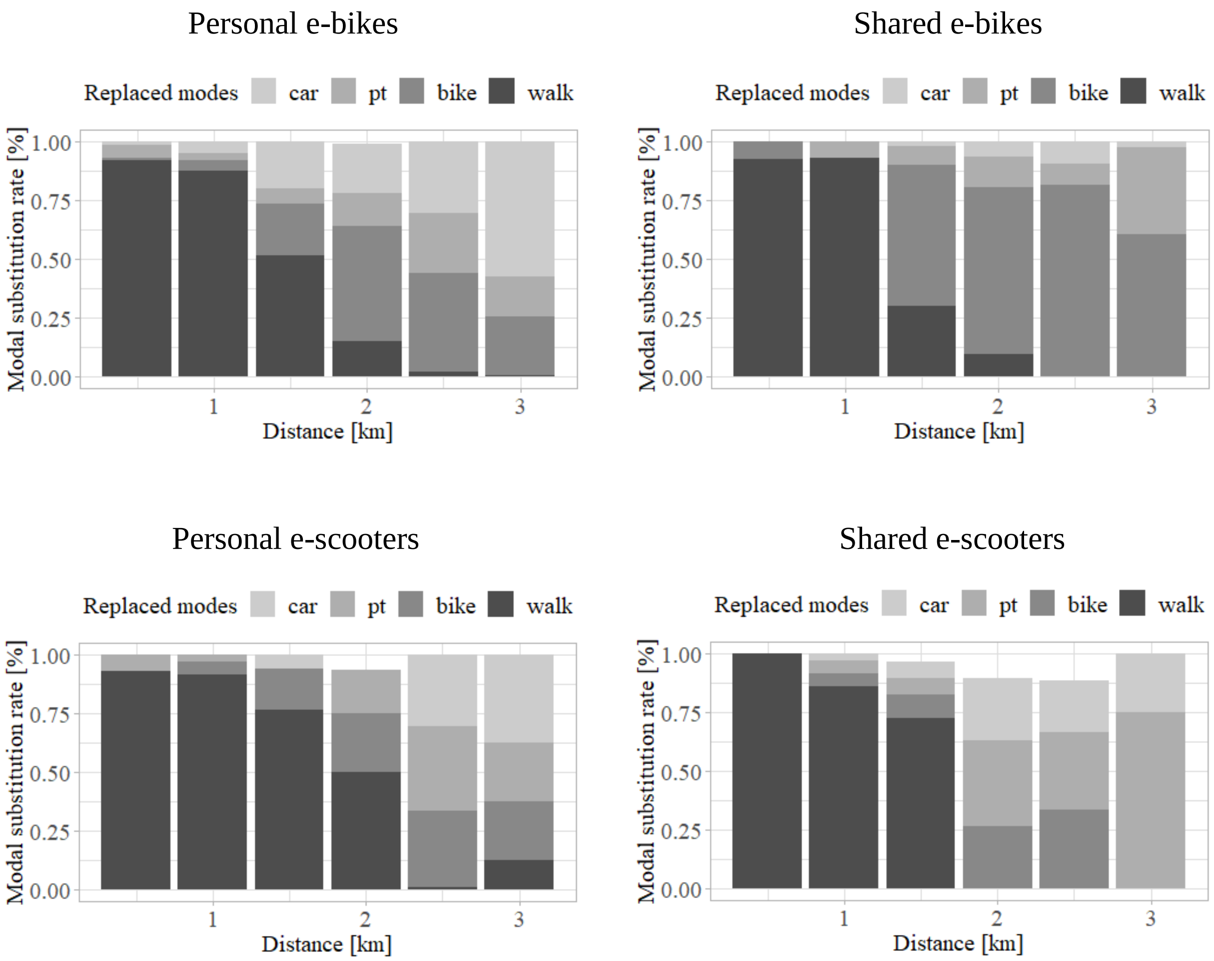
show a similar substitution pattern to personal e-bikes with the exception of replacing more walk and fewer car trips, shared e-scooters predominantly replace walk and PT trips. In general, the trip-level substitution rates exhibit a higher share of walking trips than the km-level substitution rates. The reason is that walking trips are comparatively short, thus have less impact in distance-based measures.

Table 4 Micro-mobility substitution rates (trip-level and km-level) derived from the mode choice model.

	E-Bike (personal)		E-Bike (shared)		E-Scooter (personal		E-Scooter (shared)	
Mode	trip	km	trip	km	trip	km	trip	km
Walk	26%	9%	25%	10%	35%	19%	52%	26%
PT	21%	31%	32%	50%	23%	28%	24%	48%
Car	32%	43%	6%	8%	21%	29%	10%	12%
Bike	21%	17%	37%	33%	22%	24%	11%	11%
E-Bike (personal)			0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
E-Bike (shared)	0%	0%			0%	0%	3%	3%
E-Scooter (personal)	0%	0%	0%	0%			0%	0%
E-Scooter (shared)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		

One of the many advantages of this choice model-based approach to deriving substitution patterns is that precise distance measures for each trip are observed. For surveys, these are usually imprecise or simply not available as they are based on participants' memories of recent trips. Figure 2 displays substitution rates by distance brackets. Two general patterns emerge. For short trips, all micro-mobility modes mostly replace walking. As the distance grows, the shares of replaced public transport, bike and car trips increase. Personal e-bikes, however, replace personal cars substantially more often for longer distances than all other modes.

Figure 2 Substitution rates for micro-mobility modes by distance.

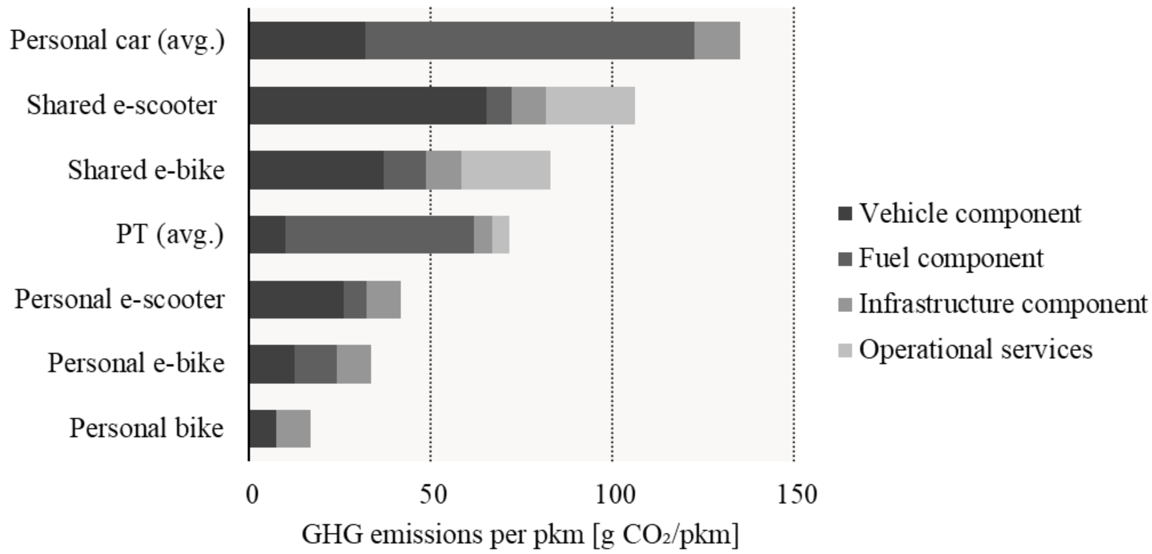


5.2. Environmental implications

The impact of a new transport mode on the sustainability of the surrounding transport system depends not only on the replaced modes, but also on their respective emissions. In this subsection, we integrate our findings on substitution patterns with previous findings on gross CO_2 emissions to calculate the net CO_2 emissions of the different micro-mobility modes.

Building on previous work from de Bortoli and Christoforou (2020) and Hollingsworth et al. (2019), the International Transport Forum (ITF, 2020) recently conducted a comprehensive analysis of the life cycle emissions of emerging and more established transport modes. It took into account not only established components of such analyses (e.g., infrastructure wear, vehicle manufacturing, and fuel), but also developed a new component (operational services, e.g. rebalancing) which is a key differentiating characteristic and an emission driver of emerging modes such as shared micro-mobility services. Figure 3 shows the emissions in g CO_2 per passenger kilometre (pkm) for all modes relevant to this study.

Figure 3 Life cycle CO_2 emissions per passenger kilometre of selected transport modes (adapted from ITF, 2020).



We integrate these findings on CO_2 emissions with our findings on substitution patterns for shared and personal e-bikes and e-scooters to calculate their 'net emissions':

$$net\ emissions\ (mode) = gross\ emissions\ (mode) - \sum_i gross\ emissions\ (replaced\ mode_i) \qquad (1)$$

Consider the following (hypothetical) example: a shared e-scooter (106g CO_2 / pkm) replaces public transport (72g CO_2 / pkm) and walking (0g CO_2 / pkm) in equal amounts (i.e., 50% and 50%). The 'gross emissions' of shared e-scooters are 106g CO_2 / pkm. The gross emissions of the replaced modes are 36g CO_2 / pkm (calculate: 50% * 72g CO_2 / pkm + 50% * 0g CO_2 / pkm). The resulting net emissions of shared e-scooters are thus 70g CO_2 / pkm. Positive net emissions can be interpreted as the additional emissions caused per pkm by the new mode. In turn, negative net emissions can be interpreted as the emissions saved per pkm by the new mode.

Table 5 shows the resulting net emissions using the previously derived km-level substitution rates for all four micro-mobility modes. Note that only km-level substitution rates (i.e., not trip-level substitution rates) can be used for this type of analysis as trip-level substitution rates are biased towards short walk trips (see comparison in Table 4). We find that the CO_2 emissions of personal e-bikes (34g CO_2 / pkm) and personal e-scooters (42g CO_2 / pkm) are lower than the average CO_2 emissions of the modes they replace (82g CO_2 / pkm and 69g CO_2 / pkm, respectively). Shared e-bikes and shared e-scooters exhibit the opposite pattern: their CO_2 emissions are higher than the average CO_2 emissions of the modes they replace. Hence, from a short-term mode choice perspective and under current conditions, only personal e-bikes and e-scooters contribute to making transport more sustainable, while shared e-bikes and e-scooters actually emit more CO_2 than the transport modes they replace. All values can be regarded as lower limits as a certain share of trips can be assumed to be induced (i.e., not replacing previous trips), further adding to CO_2 emissions.

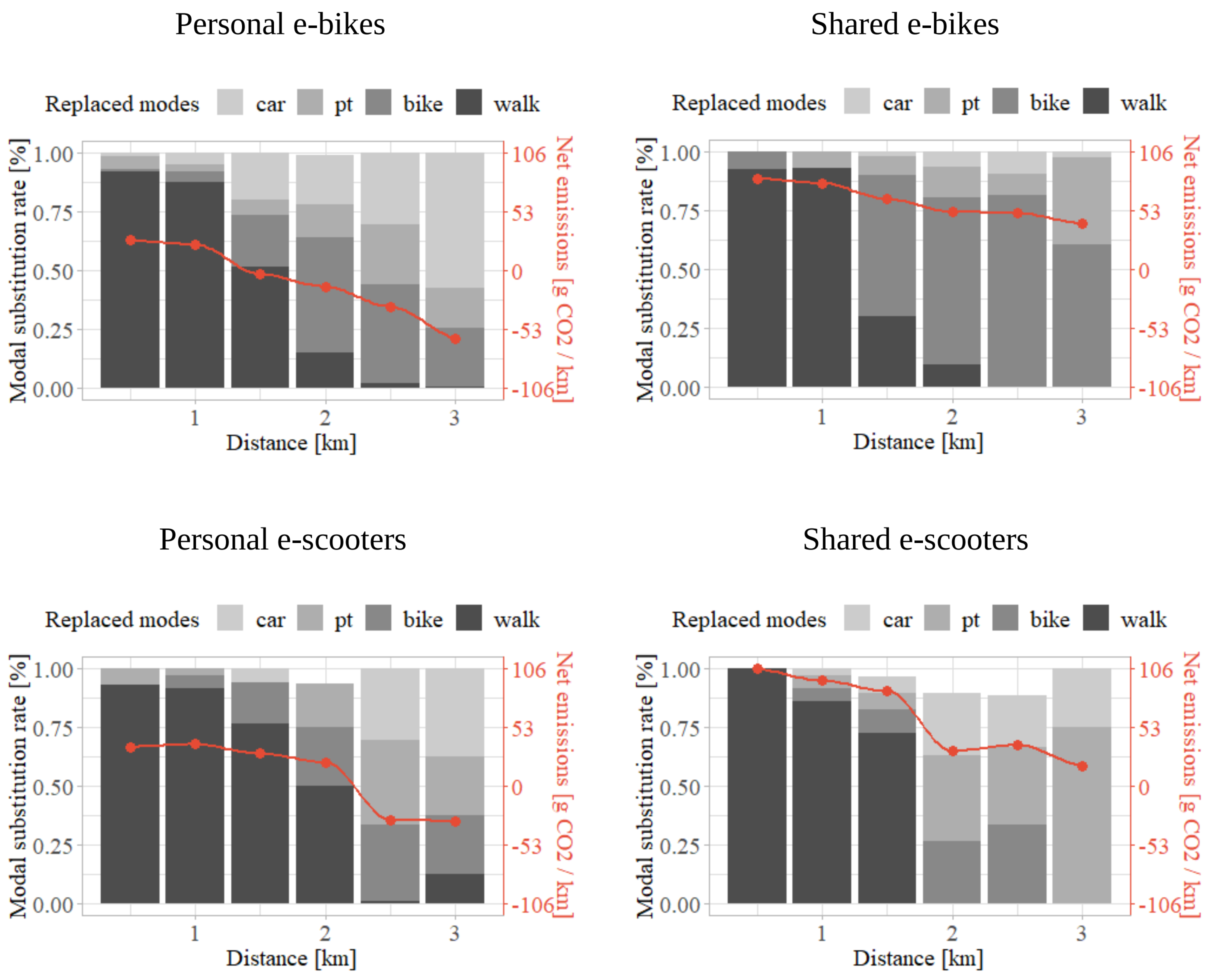
Table 5 Average micro-mobility net emissions after substitution effects.

Substituted mode	Gross emissions [g CO_2 / pkm]	Substitution patterns (km-level) by micro-mobility mode			
		E-Bike (personal)	E-Bike (shared)	E-Scooter (personal)	E-Scooter (shared)
Walk	0[†]	8%	8%	18%	20%
PT (avg.)	72[†]	32%	34%	24%	37%
Car (avg.)	135[†]	41%	21%	35%	21%
Bike	17[†]	18%	23%	22%	14%
E-Bike (personal)	34[†]		11%	1%	5%
E-Bike (shared)	83[†]	0%		0%	3%
E-Scooter (personal)	42[†]	1%	2%		1%
E-Scooter (shared)	106[†]	0%	1%	0%	
Emissions of substituted modes		82	62	69	62
Emissions of micro-mobility mode		34[†]	83[†]	42[†]	106[†]
Net emissions [g CO_2 / pkm]		**-48**	**21**	**-27**	**44**

[†] Emission calculations drawn from ITF (2020).

Finally, we know that substitution patterns vary with trip distance (cf. Figure 3). Hence, net emissions will differ by distance bracket. Figure 4 visualizes this relationship. We find that net emissions for personal e-bikes and e-scooters are positive for short distances as they predominantly replace walking for short trips. For longer distances, they replace cars and public transport substantially more often, resulting in overall negative net emissions. Net emissions of shared e-bikes and e-scooters are positive regardless of the distance bracket and highest for short distances.

Figure 4 Replaced modes (stacked bars) and resulting per-kilometre net emissions (dots/line) for micro-mobility modes by distance.



6. Contributions and conclusions

This is the first study to collect revealed preference data for and to estimate a comprehensive mode choice model between several shared and personal micro-mobility modes (e-bikes, e-scooters) and more established transport modes (public transport, car, bike, walk). Our contributions to research, policy and practice are threefold.

First, our results build the foundation to incorporate micro-mobility into transport network simulations to understand and to forecast their impact at system level and under varying policy scenarios. All else equal, the choice model reveals that trip distance, precipitation and access distance are fundamental to shared micro-mobility mode choice. Users are willing to walk between ~60m and ~200m to access shared e-scooters and shared e-bikes, respectively. Pre-booking functionality decreases the disutility of larger access distances. These results are not only useful to researchers and practitioners aiming to extend transport network simulations, but can also inform service provider's decisions on how to optimize their vehicle repositioning schemes.

Second, we demonstrate how choice models can be used to derive distance-based substitution patterns. Distance-based substitution patterns are more adequate for estimating environmental implications than common trip-based substitution patterns that are elicited through surveys for several reasons. First, it is substituted distance and not substituted trips that matters when calculating environmental implications. Second, substitution patterns derived from choice models are valid for all trips, not just the ones explicitly asked for, as they build on user preferences. Third, substitution patterns derived from choice models are more reliable than those derived from stated preference surveys, which are prone to biases such as the recall bias or the social desirability bias. This methodological contribution will gain in relevance as further new mobility services are introduced and their environmental implications will need to be assessed.

Third, our results yield direct policy implications for cities aiming to reduce transport-related CO_2 emissions. We show that personal e-bikes and e-scooters emit less CO_2 than the transport modes they replace, while shared e-bikes and e-scooters emit more CO_2 than the transport modes they replace. This finding challenges a common vision in transport that 'sharing is caring' for the environment. For micro-mobility, the relationship indeed appears to be reverse. One the one hand, city administrations can use these insights to justify public subsidies for personal e-bike / e-scooter sales and investments in bike lanes to increase their mode share further. On the other hand, our results suggest caution when admitting and licensing shared micro-mobility providers. City administrations can collaborate with and require providers to improve the two main sources of CO_2 emissions of shared micro-mobility (operational services and vehicle manufacturing) while safeguarding their potential to improve transit catchment areas and to ease peak-time transit occupancy (e.g., Bielinski et al., 2021; de Bortoli and Christoforou, 2020; ITF, 2020). While shared e-bikes and e-scooters might increase CO_2 emissions in the short-term, they could help spark sustainable mobility transitions in the long-term if usage leads to ownership. Clearly, longitudinal studies are needed to establish this relationship.

Finally, we acknowledge that this study has limitations. Although COVID-19 incidence rates were comparatively low in Switzerland during the time of study[11], travel behaviour was still affected. Most of all, public transport usage remained lower than usual (Molloy et al., 2021). Our study thus potentially over-estimates public transport substitution by other modes.

[11] The 7-day incidence rate per 100,000 inhabitants ranged between 1.4 on 1 June and 27.0 on 1 October. In comparison, the highest rate was reported on 11 November (666.3).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Daniel J. Reck: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. Henry Martin: Data pre-processing. Kay W. Axhausen: Conceptualization, Writing - review & editing.

Acknowledgements

The data was collected as part of a joint study with Swiss Federal Railways that was financed through the ETH Mobility Initiative (MI-01-19). We thank Christopher Tchervenkov for his help in creating the non-chosen alternatives through MATSim and Stephane Hess for his methodological advice.

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Appendix 1

We specify the utility functions for the mixed logit model using the abbreviations as follows:

Modes		Attributes			
WA	Walk	DI	Trip distance	PTL	PT season ticket (local)
PT	Public transport	AD	Access distance	PTC	PT season ticket (nation)
CA	Car	TR	Transfers	PTB	PT season ticket (bundle)
BI	Bike	EL	Elevation	HHC	Cars in household
PEB	Private e-bike	MO	Morning	HHB	Bikes in household
SEB	Shared e-bike	NI	Night	HHE	E-bikes in household
PES	Private e-scooter	PR	Precipitation	HHS	E-scooters in household
SES	Shared e-scooter	WI	Wind	UE	University education
				FE	Full-time employment
				AG	Age
				FE	Female

Utility functions

$$U_{WA} = ASC_{WA}$$

$$U_{PT} = ASC_{PT} + \beta_{PT_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{PT_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{PT_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{PT_{AD}} * AD + \beta_{PT_{TR}} * TR + \beta_{PT_{PTB}} * PTB + \beta_{PT_{PTL}} * PTL + \beta_{PT_{PTC}} * PTC$$

$$U_{CA} = ASC_{CA} + \beta_{CA_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{CA_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{CA_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{CA_{HHC}} * HHC$$

$$U_{BI} = ASC_{BI} + \beta_{BI_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{BI_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{BI_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{BI_{HHB}} * HHB + \beta_{BI_{WI}} * WI * DI + \beta_{BI_{EL}} * EL * DI$$

$$U_{PEB} = ASC_{PEB} + \beta_{PEB_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{PEB_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{PEB_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{PEB_{HHE}} * HHE + \beta_{PEB_{MO}} * MO + \beta_{PEB_{NI}} * NI$$

$$U_{SEB} = ASC_{SEB} + \beta_{SEB_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{SEB_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{SEB_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{SEB_{PTB}} * PTB + \beta_{SEB_{AD}} * AD + \beta_{SEB_{MO}} * MO + \beta_{SEB_{NI}} * NI + \beta_{SEB_{AG}} * AG + \beta_{SEB_{FE}} * FE + \beta_{SEB_{UE}} * UE + \beta_{SEB_{FT}} * FT$$

$$U_{PES} = ASC_{PES} + \beta_{PES_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{PES_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{PES_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{PES_{HHS}} * HHS + \beta_{PES_{MO}} * MO + \beta_{PES_{NI}} * NI$$

$$U_{SES} = ASC_{SES} + \beta_{SES_{DI}} * DI + \beta_{SES_{DI2}} * DI^2 + \beta_{SES_{PRDI}} * PR * DI + \beta_{SES_{PTB}} * PTB + \beta_{SES_{AD}} * AD + \beta_{SES_{MO}} * MO + \beta_{SES_{NI}} * NI + \beta_{SES_{AG}} * AG + \beta_{SES_{FE}} * FE + \beta_{SES_{UE}} * UE + \beta_{SES_{FT}} * FT$$

Note that all alternative specific constants are random to account for taste heterogeneity in mode choice between individuals.