

## **Bike Sharing at the USF Tampa Campus**

For the last 15 years, bike sharing has received increasing attention as a transportation service that appeals to users for short trips, and which can reduce traffic congestion and be earth-friendly. There are several bike sharing models out there. Ten years ago, the Tampa Downtown Partnership and the City of Tampa launched the OrangeCycle Project. It failed after six months. Many of these programs have failed in the past due to lack of sufficient marketing research and preparation. Some programs have been successful. It starts with a strong tie between a large enough user group with a transportation need that can be met through a bike sharing program. It survives and thrives with a well-conceived operational plan and stable ongoing funding. Several European cities have bike sharing programs that have received much media attention. In the U.S., bike sharing programs are frequently tried on university campuses. These represent two very different user groups and very different program operating environments.

Another consideration is to take a step back, and ask, what are we trying to accomplish? For example, do we want to create a safe bicycling environment for bicyclists and encourage more bicycling? Are we trying to reduce parking demand on campus? Are we trying to help students get to class on time? There may be many good ways to accomplish the goal of interest. Bike sharing may or may not be the best way to accomplish the goal.

The USF Sustainable Initiatives Committee within the USF Office of Sustainability has discussed bike sharing. The Transportation Subcommittee can help address questions.

### **What is the bike sharing concept?**

Short-term bicycle rental available at numerous locations within a locality

### **What does bike sharing accomplish?**

- Eliminates need to own a bike
- Encourages more bicycling which in turn:
  - Reduces traffic congestion and parking demand on campus
  - Reduces air pollution
  - Reduces carbon footprint
  - Reduces dependency on foreign oil and nonrenewable resources
  - Reduces roadway construction and maintenance costs
  - Improves health
  - Improves livability of the community
  - Supports efficient and inexpensive transportation

## **Who is doing it? A few examples**

- University of Texas, Orange Bike Project. Operated by a subcommittee of the Campus Environmental Center, which is an agency of Student Government
- University of Virginia
- University of Portsmouth

## **How do bike sharing programs work?**

- They can be organized as a public bicycle program with open user group or a private program requiring membership.
- Depending upon what trip types are served by the bike sharing program, the bikes are carefully located for easy access to customer groups, for example, at transit stations or stops.
- Some bike-sharing programs require inserting coins into the locker unit to release the bike, others allow use of a swipe card. Other programs rent out the bike for a semester. Other programs record the amount of time the bike is used, and pricing is based upon timed usage.
- Bike-sharing programs have been undertaken by several institution types, including government, transit agency, university, non-profit, advertising company, for-profit

## **What are the issues that must be addressed in developing a bike sharing program?**

- Who is the target market for bike sharing? How would it serve them?
- What entity should operate a bike sharing program?
- Free or for a fee?
- What type of bike is best?
- Open to public or membership only?
- Is there a geographic boundary beyond which the bikes are not permitted to go? For example, for use on campus only, or would students be allowed to take them home?
- Liability: If a student gets hurt while using the bike sharing program, who is responsible? How would a bike sharing program manage risk? People can sue regardless of signing a waiver.
- Bike lock and storage units—what technology to use? Where to place? Payment by swiped debit card?
- Bike theft/lost bikes
- Bike maintenance: Offer bike mechanic work shops and/or provide a mobile bike mechanic, “Bike Hub” old horse trailers, `bike store, workshop meeting place for the USF bike club
- Pricing for participation
- Funding for start-up and ongoing operations
- If all the bikes end up on one side of town/campus, who relocates the bikes? This may become a daily task.

## **How much does it cost to start up and keep operational?**

In general:

- Capital expenses: \$3,600 to \$5,000 per bike, including bikes, stations, kiosks, back end system
- Annual operating Expenses: \$1,500 to \$3,000 per bike, including maintenance, distribution, call center, administration

But first...Is there a sufficient and safe bicycle facilities network that connects user origins and destinations? Does the general environment support bicycling?

## **Bicycling at USF: What are the existing conditions for bicycling?**

- Facilities: Bike lanes, paths, signage, parking, covered parking, showers, lockers, lighting at night
- Operations: Knowledge of and abidance of motor vehicle and bicycle laws? Campus etiquette?

## **What are existing bicycling programs and activities already at and near USF?**

- USF Bicycle Club
- [www.tampabaycycle.com](http://www.tampabaycycle.com)
- Competitive bicycling team
- Campus police on bikes
- Campus bike registration program
- Bike safety programs
- HART bikes on buses
- Hillsborough MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Hillsborough County USF-area Multi-Modal Transportation District and Temple Terrace MMTD
- New North Transportation Alliance at CUTR

## **What should be our overall goals for bicycling at USF and how should they be best accomplished?**

Whatever goals, objectives and programs are adopted, they should be consistent with and incorporated into the USF Climate Action Plan and the USF Tampa Campus Master Plan

If a bike sharing program is started, it is recommended to start out very small and narrowly focused and stick with it.

## Case Study

### University of Texas at Austin, Orange Bike Project

- Operated by a subcommittee of the Campus Environmental Center, which is an agency of Student Government
- To raise money for the program, there is an annual Silent Bike Auction of all the abandoned bikes on campus. Last year, there were over 150 bikes, some bought for as little as \$3 and as much as \$1000. The auction raised \$6966.
- To address the liability issue, the students went directly to attorneys, the university is not liable.

## Sources and References

“Bike-Sharing: Transit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, Association for Commuter Transportation, Paul DeMaio, MetroBike, LLC, Washington, D.C., Powerpoint presentation found at [http://data.memberclicks.com/site/asct/DeMaio ACT presentation.pdf](http://data.memberclicks.com/site/asct/DeMaio_ACT_presentation.pdf) August 31, 2009.

There are several for-profit bike sharing outfits.

Paul DeMaio  
Managing Member  
MetroBike, LLC  
Washington, D.C.  
202-684-8126  
paul@metrobike.net  
Bike-Sharing.blogspot.com