

Bike-Sharing: Is Safety an Issue Adversely Affecting its Potential for Being Embraced by Urban Societies?

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ABSTRACT

Using bicycles on an 'as-needed' basis, usually for a small rental fee and without the externalities and obligations linked to bicycle ownership, is what makes public bicycles a societally affordable medium to enhance the transition to a more sustainable urban transport paradigm. However, despite its distinctive character in terms of its potential to be a mechanism transforming in some degree urban mobility to a shared responsibility regime, bike-sharing still faces some of the same safety concerns associated with ordinary bicycle ridership. The most common problem for cyclists' wellbeing is that the traffic system is designed predominately from a car-user perspective. Even the cities that have recently implemented public bicycle programmes, and therefore showed some extra care to provide fitting urban conditions for them, have not yet achieved to fully eclipse car-orientation as the prime cornerstone of their development norms. This means that transport systems worldwide do not necessarily take fully into account the main characteristics of cyclists reflecting safety themes: cyclists are vulnerable (in a crash), flexible (in behaviour), instable (may fall off the bike), inconspicuous (difficult to see), have differing abilities (due to a wide range of the population), are conscious of effort (i.e., highly motivated to minimize energy expenditure), and sometimes seen as intruders in the traffic systems, rather than as an integral part [1]. This work refers to the results of a research scheme that meant to examine road users' attitudes directly reflecting public acceptability towards two public bicycle schemes; one future scheme in Drama (Greece, 50.000 residents) and Gothenburg's (Sweden, 500.000 residents) Styr & Ställ. Although safety was not the principal initiative for this dual study, one key conclusion was that many people could not embrace bike-sharing due to their perceptions that bicycle represents in general an unsafe travel mode and that their cities provide only limited road safety for cyclists.

Keywords: bike-sharing, public bicycles, public acceptability, safety.

REFERENCES

- [1] F. Wegman, F. Zhang and A. Dijkstra, "How to make more cycling good for road safety", Accident Analysis and Prevention 44 (2012), pp. 19-29.