

## Best Practice: Shared Bicycle Scheme to Improve Mobility

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**CITY: DUBLIN**

**POLICY AREA: TRANSPORTATION**

### BEST PRACTICE

Sponsored by the City of Dublin, “**dublinbikes**” is a self-service bicycle rental system available to people ages 14 and older. There are 550 bicycles available at 44 bicycle stations within the city center. Users purchase a Long Term Hire Card or a 3 Day Ticket to rent and return a bicycle called a “db” from any station in the network. The development of dublinbikes has strengthened the promotion of cycling as a sustainable alternative to private car usage in Dublin and has helped to foster a growing community of cycling enthusiasts.

### ISSUE

Dublin City Council commissioned extensive research to determine a sustainable means of transportation in the city. Analysis of trip generation highlighted that a significant level of trips occurring in the city were made by private car usage. If people took public transportation instead of their private vehicles, the need could not be met by the city’s existing public transport network.

The City Council identified that the implementation of a bicycle rental system could fill the void not met by the city’s existing transport network and help reduce the reliance on private car usage. The concept of a bicycle rental plan and the potential for its introduction were assessed in a broad context as well as the role the scheme currently plays in providing an environmentally sustainable and effective means of transportation movement in other European cities.

Thus, City Council sought to develop this program to strengthen the link between land use and transportation at peak and off-peak times for work, shopping and leisure purposes while reducing the harmful effects of extensive private car usage on the environment.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aims of the program are to:

- Improve mobility within the city and compliment public transportation and pedestrian movement while reducing the number of trips taken by one person in one vehicle;
- Improve the quality of life within the city center by fighting pollution (less CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometer traveled);
- Reduce travel time;
- Encourage physical exercise; and
- Boost bicycle usage within the city.

The annual cost of a subscription to this plan is €10 Euros (\$13.10 USD) per year. To date, 96% of all journeys have been free given that trips taken under 30 minutes are free of charge. The City Council has more than achieved its aims in introducing this program and has essentially delivered a free public transport system that is providing an environmentally sustainable means of traveling around the city.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The dublinbikes system provides a fully integrated transportation alternative that allows people to rent bicycles from automated self-service stations. It is part of a civic amenity package that Dublin City Council negotiated with the outdoor advertiser JCDecaux in exchange for advertising. JCDecaux can advertise for 15 years at 72 locations and in exchange, Dublin City Council will receive the following from JCDecaux:

- The actual dublinbikes or “dbs” bicycles

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- Civic advertising
- Public signage throughout the city

The development of dublinbikes involved close cooperation between Dublin City Council's Planning and Economic Development and Roads and Traffic Departments with JCDecaux, Ireland.



Staff from Dublin City Council and JCDecaux take part in the launch of dublinbikes, September 2009.  
Photos by Jason Clarke Photography courtesy of Dublin City Council.

### COST

JCDecaux meets all costs of installing, maintaining and operating the bicycle rental system. In return, they received planning permission to advertise at 72 locations in the city center. These locations were agreed by Council and complied with planning requirements.

If Dublin City Council had paid for it on its own, it would have spent €26.5 million Euros (\$38.5 million USD) over fifteen years.

### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

#### Summary Outcome

The dublinbikes program was initially conceived as a leisure option. Since the bicycles are attractive and easy to use and the infrastructure is convenient, dublinbikes has become a popular public transport option.

The City Council now views dublinbikes as an integral part of the city's transportation system. dublinbikes also minimizes the negative impacts of transportation on the global environment by reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of dublinbikes has added momentum to increasing bicycle usage in Dublin and has improved awareness of this healthy, inexpensive and environmentally friendly means of public transport that helps contribute to a more sustainable environment.

#### Level of Usage and Subscribers

The impact of the program has been measured in terms of the level of usage and number of subscribers.

The success of dublinbikes has exceeded all expectations. Based on experiences from other comparable European cities, an estimated initial number of members for the first year is 5,000. In Dublin, over 65,000 people have joined. Meanwhile,

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bicycles are used an average of 6,000 – 7,000 times a day. The network has now developed into a formal means of public transportation in Dublin city with over 3 million journeys recorded since the scheme was first launched.

Membership for dublinbikes opened in mid-August 2009. The following figures are for a long-term (one year) membership:

- Launch date - September 13, 2009: 1,400 members
- September 18, 2009: 5,000 members
- End of October 2009: 11,000 members
- December 9, 2009: 15,928 members
- January 18, 2010: 17,225 members
- April 18, 2010: 21,134 members
- May 30, 2010: 23,120 members
- December 20, 2011: 37,817 members

Other figures collected on December 20, 2011 include:

- 27,541 people had subscribed to a short term (three-day) membership.
- 2,993,723 bicycle journeys had been taken.
- 95% bicycle journeys were free as they were under the 30 minute time frame from when charges begin.
- Each of the 550 bicycles are used an average of 10 times per day.

### Future Expansion

Since the introduction of the dublinbikes scheme in 2009 Dublin City Council has been inundated with expressions of interest from members of the public, elected representatives and businesses throughout the entire city requesting that the scheme be expanded. In December 2010 the City Council adopted a Longer-term strategy which will provide for an expanded service comprising 5,000 bikes and 300 bike stations. Dublin City Council is presently designing the first of 14 proposed expansion phases which will provide for a doubling of the schemes capacity and an additional 1,000 bikes.

### Acclamation

The dublinbikes scheme has received significant international attention regarding its success with many parties and experts viewing the scheme as one of the most successful worldwide. At a national level the scheme has received numerous awards and accolades with the Irish Government now intending on replicating the scheme in other cities across Ireland.

### TIMELINE

August 10, 2009	dublinbikes membership opens.
September 13, 2009	dublinbikes launched.
April 21, 2010	City Council announced details to expand the capacity of dublinbikes (100 extra bicycles, almost 300 new bicycle stands, and 4 new bike stations).
December 2010	Dublin City Council adopts a longer-term expansion strategy which provides for 5,000 bikes and 300 bike stations.

### LEGISLATION

No legislation has been enacted or changed as a direct consequence of dublinbikes. The bicycle network operates successfully within the parameters of all statutory requirements.

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### LESSONS LEARNED

#### Design Challenges

Similar to most international cities, Dublin has a dense network of utilities underneath the city's pavement and streets. As a part of the design process, extensive levels of slit trench analysis were undertaken to ascertain the full extent of underground utilities. In certain instances, particular bicycle station sites were eliminated based on these underground utilities. In designing the system, 120 sites were identified as possible candidates for bicycle station locations. Having a surplus of station locations available provided a more efficient means of achieving the development of a transportation network consisting of 40 bicycle station sites. This was particularly beneficial where underground services restricted the development of certain sites.

#### Media difficulties

Public support for the network was vital to its success. The dublinbikes program was announced several years before people could actually use dublinbikes. This meant that it was subject to considerable media attention, and it was assumed that any problems apparent in other cities would also arise in Dublin.

Another issue discussed in the media was that the agreement between JCDecaux and Dublin City Council began to be called "bicycles for billboards," as a shorthand interpretation. This interpretation was controversial and in overcoming these difficulties, the City Council gained public support. The City Council designed a three-phase media strategy described below.

#### Phase 1

Dublin City Council released a press release on July 21, 2009 outlining all aspects of the contract and conducted several media interviews. The aim was to ensure that the advertising aspect of the contract would be discussed well in advance of the bicycle program launch on September 13, 2009 and highlighting the public amenity aspect of the program. In return for JCDecaux advertising sites, Dublin City Council negotiated a public amenity package worth approximately €54 million (\$67 million USD). The following points were also emphasized:

- The contract was the first time a public amenity dividend came out of advertising.
- The bicycle scheme was a part of a wider public amenity package.
- Dublin City Council was guaranteed to receive a return on the deal.

#### Phase 2

Phase 2 of the campaign was aimed at educating the community on the facts of dublinbikes, promoting the program as a safe, efficient, fun and easy way to get around the city. The key messages were:

- "There are 450 bicycles in 40 centrally located bicycle stations."
- "It costs €10 Euros (\$13.10 USD) to join the scheme for a year, but you can also try it out for 3 days for €2 (\$2.62 USD)."
- "We want you to use this for free: the first 30 minutes of any bicycle hire is free and we expect the average journey time to be 16-18 minutes."
- "We have learned a great deal from other cities' experiences. Extensive planning went into locating the bicycle stations and into security measures."

#### Phase 3

Phase 3 focused on the launch of dublinbikes. The City Council and JCDecaux jointly organized a launch event where approximately 180 staff members from both companies completed a "fun cycle" from the Council's civic offices to stations throughout the dublinbikes network. The launch was accompanied by a press release, a photo call and received a large amount of media coverage on print, radio and television. The national broadcaster Radio Telefis Éireann's (RTE) report is available at <http://www.rte.ie/news/2009/09/13/bicycles.html>.



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### TRANSFERABILITY

The principles of this system design are extremely straightforward and are readily transferable to most cities throughout the world. Dublin is a vibrant, densely populated city, which experiences a high level of private car usage on a daily basis. The introduction of dublinbikes has helped to deliver a connected city with improved linkages and accessibility.

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Facts and figures in this report were provided by the highlighted city agency to New York City Global Partners.