

## **Free City Bike Schemes**

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To day there is several Free City Bike schemes through over Europe and there are organised in many different ways. I will on our experience in Copenhagen try to describe some of the many problems in this kind of projects.

### **1. Bicycle Infrastructure.**

First of all I need to say a few words about the bicycle infrastructure in Copenhagen.

We have a modal split where one third of the people coming to work in the municipality come by bikes, one third by public transport and one third by cars. For a town with ½ mill. inhabitants in a region with 2 mill. it is outstanding in Europe, can only be compared to Amsterdam.

There are 300 km. of bicycle tracks on both sides of all the major streets. We have also a lot of campaigns to keep people on their bikes. In the last 20 years the number of people coming to the city centre by bike has increased from 100.000 to 160.000 daily.

### **2. The Copenhagen Schemes.**

The City Bike Schemes is a part of these campaigns. The project is now in the middle of its 6<sup>th</sup> season and there has during the years been between 1500-2000 bikes in the system.

The bike has a very special design- awarded with the Danish design prize- and is very easy to recognise: We can talk later in the exhibition with the producer of the bikes about the many technical mechanical problems.

It is an open free of charge system. The bikes can be collected from one of the 110 special city bike racks in the city centre by putting a 20 Kr. (3\$) coin in the lock on the bike and be used for unlimited time. But you need to stay inside the city centre and you can only get the coin back if you replaced the bike in one of the racks here.

There is a lot of problems to keep the bike inside the city centre area. Each bike is brought back to the centre 2½ times during a season.

### **3. Organisation.**

The project is run by a private foundation, but with a lot of assistance from the municipality and other public bodies.

The foundation is responsible for the daily administration of the project and for selling bikes to sponsors and the advertisement on the racks.

The City Bike Service take care of the repairs of the bikes and the transport of the bikes including bringing the bike back to the city centre. It is a social-rehabilitation organisation and this part of the project is very successful. They have 4 vans as running repair workshops to undertake repairs of bikes in the 110 racks and to lorries to transport the bikes. There are 20 persons in training in the system with minor handicaps and 80-90 % get a normal job after ½-1 year. They work very cheap for the scheme.

The City of Copenhagen is responsible for the construction and the maintenance of the racks. ½ of the 110 racks is placed at former paid parking spaces and ½ on pedestrian areas.

The 4<sup>th</sup> participant is the producer of the bikes. Niels Christiansen from CIOS.

#### **4. Finance.**

The project has its own income from advertising on bikes and racks. During the first 5 years it has been about 11 million DKr. At the same time the investment in racks and bikes has been 13 million DKr. Included the support from the rehabilitation centre.

The investment has been financed by the ministries, EU and the mainpart by the municipality. The lost from the missing parking places is not included.

The revenue of the foundation has only covered the running expenditure and the foundation has only been able to buy 300 new bikes over the 5 years.

In Copenhagen we are surprised. The city-bike is a very effective and visible advertising board, regularly moving throughout the city centre, seen in places where it is difficult to advertise in conventional ways and with the “green image” associated with cycling. Despite these advantages, there has been problems finding enough sponsors.

Therefor one of the discussions theme is propose to be:

*\* Is it possible to run free city bike schemes on advertising revenues alone?*

#### **5. The use of the bikes.**

In 1997 some students from our Technical University made a research of use of the bikes including interviews of 400 users. Most of the users are young men-80%. In the tourist season- July and August- about ½ of the users are tourists.

The tourist use the bikes in groups and for the whole day. The Danes goes single and make short trips. Concerning trips made by Danes ½ of them has purpose for work, home or education. A third of the trips started or ended at a transport terminal. So they have something to do with commuter traffic.

Our dream from the start was that the project should expand fast to be a part of the public traffic system. But as long we have only 1500 bikes in a City like Copenhagen, you can never rely on finding a bike. You can never to use a city-bike if you need to be a certain place at a certain time.

Therefor another discussion theme is purposed to be:

*\* Can free city-bikes have any effect on the general traffic pattern or are they only for leisure?*

The city-bikes have been, and still are, subject of great public focus both in Denmark and internationally. Our tourist organisation state that the city-bikes have become a tourist attraction themselves- like The Little Mermaid and Tivoli.

The bikes have proven to be an enjoyable and healthy way of sightseeing and taking part of the Danish bicycle culture. Maybe it could have an influence on the traffic discussions in their hometowns.

The president of United States Bill Clinton got a City Bike One in present from the Lord Mayor when he visited Copenhagen in 1998. So the city-bikes have made a real and permanent improvement to Copenhagen's image as a "green" clean city with a healthy environment. But without to be a traffic instrument.

It raises our 3<sup>rd</sup> proposal for discussion:

*\* How much should the municipalities get involved?*

## **6. Conclusions.**

The City Bike Service is a success and is recommended to every body. Unfortunately it is still difficult to find enough sponsors to enlarge the number of bikes up to the 5000 we want.

One possibility to find more money could be to enlarge the advertising stands. But how much advertising do we want in the City Centre?

It has also been debated whether the coin system is the best method for accessing the city-bike. The Amsterdam model with a identification/member card system, in which users pay a subscription for access to the bikes has also been discussed.

Therefore our 4<sup>th</sup> discussion theme is:

*\* Which differences are there in use and maintenance between open systems with coins and closed systems with smart cards?*