

# From foldable to portable bicycles

Discussion paper for Velo Mondial 2000

András Tóth (Hungarian Cyclists' Federation)

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**Statement:** further improvement of existing foldable bicycles may well lead to a new vehicle category, where the driver carrying its vehicle is an equal option.

This portable bicycle would meet the demands of a large number of potential user groups, including:

- car drivers (P + bike)
- public transport users (especially those who have to walk far or change in their commuting)
- everybody who has ever been afraid of bicycle theft or sudden rain
- anybody interested in improving his or her mobility in general

	TODAY	TOMORROW (?)
	Foldable bicycle	Portable bicycle <i>definition: carryable folding bicycle (for features see below)</i>
<b>weight and design</b>	too heavy and cumbersome to be carried around for long	as convenient as a handbag
<b>folding</b>	not designed to be folded and unfolded several times in a short time	folding is as natural as closing an umbrella before entering a building
<b>quality</b>	often unstable structure and limited features (low speed, no gears etc.)	nearly equivalent to a normal bicycle (except for small wheels)
<b>price</b>	expensive	cheap
<b>production</b>	small manufacturers or limited series sold with cars	mass-production
<b>availability</b>	limited distribution	general availability
<b>public</b>	bicycle "freaks" (like for recumbents and other extra bicycles)	everybody aware of it and using it
<b>foreseen usage</b>	limited scope (e.g. designed for carboots and not for public transport, or the case of touring folders)	general bicycle for theft prevention (always with you), easy storage, intermodality, with the possibility to cycle longer distances, short town trips
<b>promotion</b>	close to zero promotion (small scale or mouth to mouth)	well-organised promotional campaigns to the appropriate target groups and possibility for people to try them

## Questions for the debate:

1. Is it possible to further reduce the weight of a foldable bicycle and at the same time keep it stable?
2. Is there anybody currently working on designing a portable bicycle? If not, why?
3. Do you see a possibility for authorities or other external elements catalyzing the research, production, promotion and distribution of the portable bicycle? Earlier examples: human genome, zero-emission car, or just recently: free citybike system with custom bicycles prepared for town municipalities. Is it necessary or would it work with just the bicycle manufacturers involved?

**Contact:** Budapest 1046 Mikszáth u. 102. Hungary

Fax: (36) 1-360-31-24 email: toth\_andras@yahoo.co.uk