Bike Share Workshop

On September 18, 2014, the City of Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department co-hosted a Bike Share Workshop with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and the Association of the Students of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (ASUN) and a public meeting on the topic of bike share. After months of discussion about bike share systems and what one could mean for Lincoln, the workshop was put together to provide answers to questions and to begin to identify how a bike share system would be implemented in Lincoln. The workshop and public meeting intended to answer what bike share is, how it works, what types of bike share systems are available, and how other communities have gone about implementing their systems. Forty-five stakeholders attended the daylong workshop and twelve people attended the public meeting.

During the morning sessions, Alison Cohen, of Bicycle Transit Systems, presented the concept of bike sharing (i.e. what it is, what it looks like, and how it works) along with the benefits of having a bike share program and the industry's recent expansion. Next, a roundtable discussion was held with existing program vendors Alta Bicycle Share and B-Cycle. The vendors discussed how their system models and management worked in various communities. In the afternoon session, a panel discussion was held on bike sharing best practices and mistakes to avoid. Alison Cohen returned to speak from her experiences. Alison was joined by Kären Haley, of Indianapolis Cultural Trial, Inc., and Ben Turner, of Omaha B-Cycle. The panel discussed how bike share programs were implemented in their communities, how they are currently operating, what works best in the community and why, and some missteps that they have encountered and how to avoid or remedy those situations. In the final session of the day, participants in groups at tables and were given a map to discuss how a bike share program would work in Lincoln, with a focus on downtown.

At the end of the workshop, surveys were handed out to gather input from those that spent the day learning about bike share. Participants were asked four questions and given space for additional comments or concerns. The questions were:

- How supportive are you of bringing a bike share program to Lincoln;
- What bike share model do you think would fit the needs of the City of Lincoln;
- Are there any areas outside of Downtown that you feel may benefit from a bike share station; and
- Would you like to receive updates and/or continue discussions about Bike Share?

Focusing on the first question that asked How supportive are you of bringing a bike share program to Lincoln, all of the participants noted that they were either generally (23 percent) or extremely (77 percent) supportive of bringing a Bike Share program to Lincoln.
Participants at the workshop were also asked what type of bike share model they thought would work best in Lincoln. During the workshop, vendors from Alta Bicycle Share and B-Cycle gave a presentation on how their models worked. Both Alta and B-Cycle are examples of what a smart dock station is. Zagster and Social Bikes (SoBi) are smart bike models and were invited to attend the workshop but were unable to attend. Zagster and SoBi sent materials for the participants to read and videos were shown during lunch about their programs. A few participants did note in their surveys that they would have liked to receive more information from the smart bike models before committing to a decision. Participants were given the option between the smart dock and smart bike models as well as undecided. Thirteen percent of the group noted they would like to see a combination of the smart dock and smart bike system. Overwhelmingly, at 71 percent, the workshop participants thought that a smart dock station would fit the City of Lincoln’s needs the best.
During a mapping exercise, workshop participants were asked to select no more than five locations in the downtown area that would be a good location for housing a bike share station. At the end of the exercise, each member was asked to pick their top location and state why they felt that this was optimal. After evaluating the responses, a few of the popular choices selected were identified as “hubs” of activity.

- Pinnacle Bank Arena – hub of downtown activity
- Jayne Snyder Trail Center/Union Plaza – hub of cycling activity and gateway to downtown activity
- Student Union – hub of university/student activity
- Gold’s Building (11th and N) – hub of transit users/transit transfer location

These locations would be ideal starting points for a bike share system in the downtown area as they link potential users with various activities where they would be interested in using a bike share system.

Participant’s bike share station selections are delineated on the map by either blue or red points on the map. The red points are locations that individuals chose as their top location. There were no real surprises with the selections and there was a healthy mix of campus and downtown/Haymarket locations chosen.
Workshop Selected Sites for a Bike Share Location - 09/19/14
Mindminder Sites for a Bike Share Location - 10/20/14

*Downtown Sites Only

City of Lincoln: Urban Development
Participants were asked in the workshop participant survey if there were any areas outside of downtown that they would like to see a bike share station located. The locations identified include:

- Potential north and south drop off from the Billy Wolff and Jamaica Trails
- North Bottoms
- Along Cornhusker/Superior
- Vine area apartments/housing
- Sunken Gardens area
- North Lincoln
- East Campus
- Nebraska Wesleyan
- Union College
- Links with transit
- Novartis Trailhead
- Jayne Snyder Trail Center
- 27th and Highway 2
- Holmes Lake
- Medical Centers
- Shopping areas
- Major parks
- Kaplan
- SECC
- Major employers
- Zoo
- Antelope Park
- SouthPointe
- SE WalMart
- Piedmont Shopping Center
- Along trail system
- Husker Hall
- Gateway Mall
- University Place
- Pioneers Park/SW Lincoln
- Assurity Building
- 84th Street MoPac trailhead
- Hartley/Clinton/Near South

These additional locations are useful in determining how to phase-in a larger system. What was learned from other communities who started out with a smaller system and grew it or plan to grow it in phases was to have a concentrated system in the first phase. This concentration of bikes and stations is helpful in building a ridership base as they know that the system is reliable as there is a level of availability of bikes and bike stations nearby. If the need warrants, the system can be expanded to serve other areas as data suggests that people would utilize.

Public Survey and Map
In conjunction with the stakeholder workshop, a public meeting and online “town hall” were held for additional feedback from the community and to collect thoughts on bike share. While the data we collected through the survey and map is not scientifically valid, the information is useful. The public meeting was held the evening of the daytime workshop. Kären Haley, one of the workshop speakers, provided a brief overview of the information that was presented at the workshop. The public meeting presentation was broadcast live, recorded and replayed on Channel 5 several times as a way to reach out to the public.

A MindMixer® topic on the City’s website was also available during the month of September to gather feedback. There were two parts to the topic, one being a survey and the other an interactive map. Respondents were first asked a few demographic questions regarding age and gender. One hundred people participated in the online survey. The age and demographic portion of the survey responses are seen in the following tables. The largest age cohorts were the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups. Typically, the millennial generation is looking for alternatives/additional options for commuting. Having a large
response rate from this group may reflect the answers given regarding their interest in having a bike share system. The participants were also asked to provide an answer to gender in which there was a good gender distribution that responded to the survey.
Participants in the online survey were then asked what modes of transportation they had access to on a regular basis. Respondents were given an opportunity to choose more than one option. Not surprisingly, most respondents (94%) noted that they had access to a car, van, SUV, or truck followed closely by personal bike (76%).

Survey participants were also asked if they had used a bike share program in another community to gauge how many of the respondents had firsthand knowledge of how a bike share system works. Fifty-nine percent had not used a bike share program in another community. Those that had used bike share were then asked in what community they participated in a program. The responses were as follows:

- New York City, NY (5)
- Omaha, NE (10)
- Denver, CO (3)
- Des Moines, IA
- Germany
- Chicago, IL (5)
- Kansas City, MO (5)
- London, UK
- Minneapolis, MN (3)
- Madison, WI
- Boulder, CO (3)
- Aspen, CO
- Nashville, TN (2)
- Nebraska City, NE
- San Francisco, CA
- Europe
- Valencia, Spain
- Vassar College
- Washington, D.C.
- Cascais, Portugal
The next question asked respondents if they would use bike share if it was available in Lincoln. A strong majority (68%) selected that they would use bike share if implemented, followed by 23% stating they were unsure, and nine respondents selected no. This indicates a strong interest from the respondents in bike share.

Communities typically have bike share systems installed for tourism purposes or short trips, which is why most systems offer the benefit for annual pass members to have the first 30 minutes free. In Omaha, annual pass members are given the first 60 minutes free since a large part of their ridership uses the trail system for recreation. Participants in the online survey were asked what types of trips they would use for bike share and given multiple options to choose from. The top selection, at 55 responses, was for the trails, followed by work (52), restaurants (50), and tourism (47).
Most bike share systems can add features that will fit the users. While bike share systems typically have membership cards, mobile apps, and websites, it was an important question to pose to a potential ridership base on what types of amenities they would like with a program. Given the responses from the participants, the use of technology to use the system is important.

Participants were also asked what types of concerns they have about a bike share program. While safety has been a concern with bike share systems in other communities, in particular, helmet usage and laws, participants did not select safety as one of their top concerns. Availability of bikes and stations was overwhelmingly chosen as the top concern followed by cost, convenience, and ease of use.
Participants were asked what would motivate them to use bike share. They were allowed to choose multiple options. All of the choices seemed to fit the desires of those who would be interested in using a bike share system with convenience receiving the most response.
Along with the survey, an online map was utilized on MindMixer for the public to discuss possible station locations. At the end of the public comment period, the map had received 433 views, 261 interactions, and 30 topics. The 30 topics discussed on MindMixer fell in line with the selections chosen at the workshop/workshop participant surveys. One slight surprise from the online map was that the new Pinnacle Bank Arena was not discussed as a location that would benefit from bike share (although it was covered and chosen as a favorite in the workshop mapping exercise).

**Bike Share in Other Communities**

During the public participation process, there was a general interest in how this could move forward in Lincoln with discussion on how much it would cost to implement, how could it be paid for, how might it be phased in, and how to maintain funding in order to keep it running successfully in the future.

In an effort to determine possible implementation costs, a review of three communities was completed to identify their start-up costs.

**Omaha B-cycle Bike Share System**

Omaha estimated their start-up costs per station (5 bikes and 11 docks) cost approximately $35,000. Their initial bike share system started with 57 B-cycles and 11 B-stations throughout Omaha. Without factoring in additional costs (i.e. website, staff, and others) the infrastructure cost for the bikes and stations equates to roughly $385,000. In an interview with Ben Turner, Program Director of Omaha B-cycle, he noted that there was not a tremendous initial investment other than for the equipment. Omaha B-cycle spent less than $10,000 on printed promotional materials and received a $20,000 sponsorship grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield to help cover those initial promotional and salary costs. When asked how Omaha B-cycle was ready to move on expanding their bike share system, Ben stated that they were ready when the income from the program justified adding the stations. He noted that having more stations is more important than having more bikes – that it is important for users to feel that there are adequate places to pick-up/return the bikes. It is estimated that each bike share bike can cost roughly $400-500 per year ($28,500 estimated for the entire 57 bike system) to operate and maintain. The ongoing funding is integral in maintaining a working system.

**Topeka Social Bike (SoBi) Bike Share System**

Topeka, Kansas is currently under contract with Social Bikes (SoBi) to implement a system in their community. SoBi is a “smart bike” system where there is not the traditional docking station that the bikes must be returned to after every trip. Topeka is purchasing 100 bikes, four payment kiosks, 200 SoBi Bicycle Racks and plates as well as ten large/compact information and map panels. They are looking at a start-up cost of approximately $304,120 and $3,660 in ongoing monthly maintenance costs.

**Birmingham, Alabama**

Birmingham has completed a feasibility study and final business plan. The costs outlined in the Final Business Plan are estimated based on the “smart dock” system. Birmingham total estimated capital and start-up costs were approximately $1,960,000 for a 40 station/400 bikes/680 dock system. According to Birmingham Bike Share’s Final Business Plan, the estimated total bikeshare annual operating costs (includes operating costs and system upkeep) by year 5 are approximately $650,000. Birmingham is considering an array of options for funding including Congestion, Mitigation, and Air Quality (CMAQ), CommuteSmart, Alabama Partners for Clean Air, Safe Routes to School, private funding, and
sponsorship/advertising. Sponsorship has been important for most bike share systems as it help fund ongoing operations costs annually.

Next Steps
Based on the feedback we received from the workshop and those that participated in the MindMixer survey/map, we found that there is enough interest to pursue start-up funding for a bike share system. The Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department is currently putting together a proposal for CMAQ funds to implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program. As bike share fits within the scope of TDM, funding for a bike share system is being requested as a part of the CMAQ application. Along with pursuing start-up funding, a detailed implementation strategy should be developed for locations of bike share. This would also include deciding between the smart dock and smart bike system, how many bikes and stations to start with, and how the system would be phased. Conversations with potential sponsors and interested partners should be held moving forward.

There have been some concerns about initial start-up costs and how the system will be funded in the long term. More detailed information on employee and on-going maintenance costs should be discussed with possible vendors to estimate the on-going monthly/annual costs. Determining those costs should help discussions with potential sponsors of the system to fund the system.