Backgrounder on PBS for the UBC Campus

The bicycle, a two-wheeled, human-powered vehicle, was invented in the late 1800s in Europe, where it has since then grown to be major mode of transportation, with varying levels of implementation in cities around the world. Various studies have outlined the health benefits resulting from cycling for both recreational and practical purposes due to its active, human-powered aspect (Oja et al, 2011).

Public bike share (PBS), for the purposes of this document, is defined as a service by which bicycles are made available to the public for shared use, usually on short-distance trips. This service is generally supported by software technology which allows users to unlock system-owned bicycled through physical computer kiosks or mobile applications. As of 2016, 121 programs were available in North America and 1,188 worldwide (MetroBike LLC, 2017). Vancouver’s PBS, Mobi, with 1,500 bikes and 150 stations approved, was launched in the summer of 2016 and spans the area bounded within the downtown peninsula, Arbutus Street, Main Street, and 16th Avenue. Mobi is third-party owner operated, but funding and support is provided by the City of Vancouver on a contractual basis.

AMS Involvement

As a student union, the Alma Mater Society (AMS) represents over 54,000 undergraduate and graduate students studying at University of British Columbia, Vancouver. The AMS aims to improve the quality of the educational, social, and personal lives of the students of UBC, in every way possible. A PBS system is currently being studied by UBC Campus and Community Planning (C+CP) to determine feasibility and delivery models, as well as forecast demand. A delivery goal of late Summer 2018 has been indicated. UBC C+CP have engaged the AMS in a consultation process and seeks to align their goals with those of stakeholders. This policy is developed in support of this consultation process.

The AMS seeks to be involved with PBS delivery, in line with its mission to improve the quality of the educational, social, and personal lives of the students of UBC. The
AMS believes that the implementation of a successful bike share program will encourage UBC community members to take up cycling, walking, and/or transit as their dominant mode of transportation, either during their time at UBC or afterwards, as has been accomplished by the implementation of the U-Pass program. This is in line with Policy C 3.2 in the City of Vancouver’s Transportation 2040 Plan which includes providing a PBS in coordination with TransLink’s Compass Card program and expanding into the Metro Core, UBC, and other high priority locations. This is also consistent with UBC’s 2014 Transportation Plan first target which aims for “two-third of all trips to and from UBC will be made by walking, cycling, or transit.” The current mode split for these aforementioned modes is currently at 55%, and it is anticipated that a successful PBS program will lead to a positive mode shift.

Goals

Envisioning a vibrant and more connected campus, the AMS has listed the qualities that a PBS program would incorporate:

- Enhances campus connectivity by providing an expansion and improvement of the public transportation system;
- Provides preferential pricing to UBC students per contractual basis;
- Allows for competition which drives lower costs and higher quality of service;
- Contributes towards UBC’s sustainability targets by reducing single occupancy vehicles entering and exiting campus; and
- Integrates user input into the system design and operation.

The AMS has investigated several models for the provision of the PBS program as part of conversations with UBC C+CP, and has reviewed how each program would fit into its mandate before taking a stance on which model would best suit the needs of UBC students. The models considered by C+CP differ with regards to capital and operations costs; where C+CP’s preferred model involves providing an operating permit or license to an operator or operators which will be selected by March 2018 (C+CP presentation; October 4, 2017).

The AMS believes that PBS provides an opportunity for enhancing campus life regardless of what model it is implemented through, the AMS VP External Office
believes that permitting/operating license would best suit the needs of its students while supporting a limited financial commitment from UBC. A permitting option would provide the AMS with the opportunity to compete in the form of a joint partnership with third-parties such as bike share system operators and maintenance facilities (AMS Bike Kitchen) where it can negotiate preferential pricing to AMS members. This is only supported when subject to the following conditions:

- The permit be reviewed and renewed every specific duration agreed upon between C+CP;
- A safety analysis and proposal/implementation plan based on the minimization of pedestrian/cyclist/motorized-vehicle conflicts;
- The implemented PBS improves the overall mobility of students, faculty, and staff within the UBC Vancouver campus;
- An educational campaign on cycling benefits and safety measures be run during the opening month of the PBS service, pedestrian priority zones and transportation guidelines; and
- The established role of the AMS Bike Kitchen be maintained or improved.

Actions

The AMS VP External Office is looking to be actively involved with the planning and implementation of the PBS program through its VP External, Sally Lin, and External Affairs Research and U-Pass Commissioner, Maria Albitar. The AMS is willing to commence communications with relevant parties as soon as a delivery model is determined by UBC C+CP. The VP External Office has already communicated with the Bike Kitchen to obtain a better understanding of their current operations, and will continue to coordinate with the organization as more details on the PBS are confirmed.
Citations


- The Bike Sharing Blogspot, 2017 [http://bike-sharing.blogspot.ca/](http://bike-sharing.blogspot.ca/)