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4 New Ideas for a Bicycle Planet

By Jennifer Kaye and Kate Malongowski

Dutch School Bus is a Bicycle Built for Ten

Some lucky Dutch schoolchildren can now put their seemingly endless energy to good use, by powering their own school bus. Dutch company De Café Racer produced an eco-friendly bicycle-bus that is steered by an adult and pedaled by up to 10 children.

The bright yellow bus is designed for riders aged 4 to 12, and its stability and high visibility provide a safe, early introduction to cycle commuting in a country where bicycling is a way of life and 95 percent of teenagers bike to school at least some of the time.

The bus has a base speed of 10 miles per hour, and a motor for backup if the students are too tired to pedal or need help with hills. Other features include a music player and a canvas cover for shelter on rainy days. There's even a bench seat where two additional children can sit back and enjoy the ride. —Kate Malongowski

Pittsburgh Rides It Forward

It's an organization that says it all in the name: Free Ride. The Pittsburgh bike collective lets riders earn a refurbished pair of wheels by volunteering their time and labor at the Free Ride warehouse.

Clients start by bringing in an old, broken bike. They learn bike repair skills as Free Ride staff guide them through the process of refurbishing a bike for their own use. Once their own bike is fixed, they can repay the cost of supplies and training by teaching their new skills to others. Free Ride also repairs and sells bikes, and offers bike repair classes to youth.

Free Ride's website describes this pay-it-forward structure as "get a bike, fix a bike, give a bike," and stresses that the organization is even more about education than bike repair. The idea is that learning bike maintenance can keep people on two wheels for a lifetime. —Kate Malongowski

In China, Bike-Sharing on a Big Scale

Hangzhou—a city of 7 million in southern China—has a bike-sharing system so successful it's reinstating bicycles as emperors of the road. The program has grown to 50,000 bikes since it started in 2008, making it the largest public bike system in the world—far surpassing Paris, the second-largest with an impressive fleet of 20,000.

Hangzhou's Public Transportation Corporation developed the system to reduce traffic congestion and help residents get to areas public buses don't reach. On an average day, 240,000 bike trips are made on Hangzhou's wide roads and segregated bicycle lanes. The bike scheme is free to users for the first hour, and each subsequent hour costs only a modest fee. It's also convenient—bikes can be returned to any of 2,050 stations, and the stations are no more than 1,000 feet apart. The city plans to expand the system to 175,000 bikes by 2020. —Jennifer Kaye

A Vending Machine—for Bikes

It's easy to see why [Bicycling magazine named Minneapolis "Best Bicycling City" last year](#). The City of Lakes is also a bike-friendly urban landscape.

The most popular route for cyclists and pedestrians is the Midtown Greenway, which now has a handy self-service bike repair kiosk thanks to local inventors Chad DeBaker and Alex Anderson. The Bike Fixtation kiosk at the Greenway transit shelter, open from 6 a.m. to midnight, offers an elevated repair stand equipped with eight essential tools, a free air compressor, and a vending machine stocked with energy drinks, snacks, bike accessories, patch kits, and even hand warmers for chilly rides. The kiosk also has tutorials for the novice mechanic on how to use the tools to fix a flat.

The inventors plan to open a second kiosk, and eventually hope to sell Bike Fixtation kiosks in other cities, keeping cyclists across the country cruising after a breakdown. —Jennifer Kaye

Jennifer Kaye and Kate Malongowski wrote this article for [The YES! Breakthrough 15](#), the Winter 2012 issue of YES! Magazine. Jennifer and Kate are editorial interns at YES!

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