



Emerging Issue: Dockless Bikeshare in North America

The following has been developed by the North American Bikeshare Association (NABSA) to respond to inquiries regarding the development of stationless bikeshare systems, or VC-backed dockless bike share companies, on the rise in North American cities. This document is intended to serve as an internal member resource. NABSA members are encouraged to use this document as a baseline, and also contact fellow member cities with questions.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

NABSA members across North America have thoughtfully and diligently established bikeshare systems in their cities. Most of our member systems are either run by local jurisdictions themselves or by private operators in partnership with local and regional government agencies. Our members work together to carefully design service areas, pricing and membership programs, tailoring them to local needs and wants. Without exception, our member systems use high quality, purpose-designed equipment built to withstand the rigors of constant public use and exposure to the elements while also remaining carefully maintained to ensure customer satisfaction and safety.

- Recently, a new generation of private, for-profit bikeshare systems already widespread in China (such as Ofo, Mobike, Dropbyke and Bluegogo) have surfaced in North America. They are reported to be very well financed by venture capital funds.
- These systems want to deploy potentially tens of thousands of inexpensive, stationless, on-demand rental bikes using a very different approach from the careful, deliberative approach to bikeshare taken by NABSA members.
- These systems use large numbers of inexpensive bicycles that may not meet the safety standards of existing North American bikeshare systems.
- In some instances, operators have not displayed a significant understanding of or interest in local regulations, which poses a threat to public safety and potentially damages the reputation of bikeshare in North America.
- This is the first that we've seen these operators in North America, and they seek to move aggressively to deploy en-masse and dominate in major cities.

GOALS

- Use NABSA's experience and collective knowledge to inform media on best practices for successful bikeshare.
- Support members with relevant information and approaches should they face these challenges.
- Create positive public support for modern bikeshare technology that ensures safe and orderly streets and sidewalks.
- To ensure continued government support for bike share.

STRATEGY

- Navigate media around dockless bikeshare to infuse NABSA's knowledge and data into the conversation, while also encouraging technological advancements to improve bikeshare across North America.

OBJECTIVES

- Prepare NABSA and NABSA members to respond to media requests with a larger vision for bikeshare and the safety of North Americans using bikeshare.
- Evaluate media opportunities for NABSA to contribute its knowledge and expertise to the timely conversation about advancing bikeshare systems.

KEY MESSAGING

- **NABSA encourages the adoption of bikeshare systems that are safe, reliable, user friendly and that meet the needs of a community while complying with local regulations.**
 - In our experience working with more than 45 systems in cities throughout North America, we've seen every type of bikeshare. Amidst the many differences, two things remain constant: prioritized safety of users and collaboration with local municipalities.
 - Physical, 'smart stations' represent a large capital investment, but also in planning, review and permitting, making stationless systems potentially much more affordable.
 - Several NABSA member systems, such as Portland, Santa Monica and Hamilton, ON utilize 'smart bike' technology that allows riders the freedom to park at public bike racks.
 - Because they lock to themselves and can be left anywhere, rogue stationless systems can create a public hazard.
- **Successful stationless systems must work cooperatively with cities and existing bikeshare systems.**
 - All existing North American smart-bike operators have worked diligently with local government partners to also site physical stations that provide safe places to park the bikes and prevent cluttered and unsafe sidewalks and streets.
 - Cities have a role in policing the right of way, and making sure that their citizens and visitors live in a safe, attractive environment. The goal is for the city and bikeshare systems to work together to build a sustainable transportation option.
 - Every system, stationless or not, must have a credible, enforceable way of maintaining bikes to ensure the safety of riders.
- **The bikeshare industry encourages innovation with safety and order.**
 - It's imperative to the sustainability of our industry that bikeshare suppliers and operators continue to innovate.
 - Because of the rigors of shared use, bikeshare bikes need to meet safety and quality standards along with applicable local and state regulations.
 - Stationless systems offer the freedom of not having to park bikes at designated stations, but without diligent rebalancing and/or technology to actively manage where and how bikes are parked, public safety problems can result.
- **Pricing plays a large role in bikeshare.**
 - There should be transparency when it comes to prices for rides and membership.
 - Many cities take equity seriously and look for ways to service the entire city.