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**New Report: As Dockless Bikeshare Systems Proliferate Around the Globe, Local Governments Must Organize the Chaos—Commuters Need Connections, Not Disruptions**

***Cities Win at Dockless Bikeshare by Integrating the Service Within its Mass Transit System and Managing the Streetscape; Mexico City, Seattle, Paris, Dublin, Montreal, Washington DC Have Had Varying Degrees of Success So Far***

NEW YORK, NY (May 17, 2018)—Dockless bikeshare, a mode of transportation that emerged in China only four years ago, needs to be regulated and integrated into urban mass transit systems rather than exist as a separate private entity to reach its potential, according to a new policy brief from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP). ITDP has outlined five key elements for a successful dockless bikeshare system, and has found that a number of cities have already embraced these best practices.

“Dockless bikeshare has a reputation for being a ‘disruptor,’ but that’s not necessarily what people need,” said ITDP Senior Research Associate Dana Yanocha, who wrote the policy brief. “The best transit innovations—especially those that are privately operated—offer riders convenient, affordable options for getting where they need to go. Local governments that have viewed dockless bikeshare as an extension of their transit systems and introduced some form of regulation have seen ridership flourish as a result.”

The ITDP policy brief, *Optimizing Dockless Bikeshare for Cities*, defines a dockless system as one having GPS-enabled bicycles that users can lock and unlock, through a smartphone app, anywhere the user wants to start or end a trip—from a public bike rack to the middle of a sidewalk. This is the main difference from “docked” bikeshare systems, in which bikes must be rented from and returned to fixed stations. More than 1,000 cities around the world offer some form of bikeshare service, with dockless becoming increasingly popular due to its scalability and relatively low capital investment required from cities to launch. Dockless bikeshare has replaced an estimated 10 percent of the car trips and 13 percent of gasoline consumption in [Shenzhen, China](https://www.bikebiz.com/news/dockless-booming-in-china).

The policy brief and accompanying publicity materials identify five key components of any system: *Five Ways to Win at Dockless Bikeshare*. A growing number of cities have prospered by implementing these elements, while other cities have experienced more disruption than smooth travels due to minimal oversight of dockless bikeshare. For example, without clearly communicated guidelines on how best to park the bicycles, dockless bikes have raised ire for blocking rights of way and other public spaces.

According to ITDP, the five elements that can make or break a dockless system are:

* **Integration with Transit**—Lowering barriers to biking—by requiring that operators provide flexible and reduced payment options, facilitating transit fare integration, and ensuring an equitable distribution of bikes—connects dockless systems to a city’s mass transit network, extending its reach.
* **Data Sharing Requirements**—Real-time data on the location of every dockless bike, as well as aggregated trip and other operations data, should be shared at the request of local governments. Usership and route patterns provide insights on infrastructure needs, and real-time data is critical for monitoring and enforcement of city regulations.
* **Public Space Management**—Fleet size caps, time-bound responses to parking issues, lock-to requirements, and designated parking areas can prevent bikes not in use from cluttering the streetscape.
* **User Protections**—As with docked bikeshare, cities should require dockless operators to clearly display safety information, meet equipment and insurance standards, and act responsibly with regard to user privacy, deposits and refunds.
* **Dedicated Staff**—For dockless bikeshare to work, cities must dedicate staff and resources to monitor operations and enforce regulations, evaluate performance, develop plans for improving bike lanes, and strengthen integration and connectivity.

**Where regulation is embraced, dockless bikeshare flourishes**

[ITDP surveyed the bikeshare systems](https://www.itdp.org/dockless/)—docked and dockless—of 15 cities in 5 continents in total to see how these principles were incorporated on the street. **Mexico City** has one of the oldest docked bikeshare systems, ECOBICI, which launched in 2010. The municipal government recently expanded the system to include pedal assist e-bikes, and initiated a pilot program that includes four private operators providing dockless bicycles. The pilot requires real-time data sharing and verifiable user information, along with maintenance of bicycle parking areas. As of 2018, bikeshare has already reduced the city’s carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 4,000 TonCO2eq—the equivalent of planting more than 11,000 trees.

“Bikeshare, as a transportation mode, is good for the environment and for public health,” said Fernanda Rivera, Director of Cycling Design and Culture for the Secretary of Environment of Mexico City. “But most importantly, this is an option that allows anyone, regardless of income, to get around town more easily. For any bikeshare, especially dockless, to be successful, it must meet this need. Improving commuting conditions is relevant when promoting non-motorized transport.”

Other cities around the world have embraced the potential of dockless bikeshare to solve often-difficult problems. **Seattle**, in the Northwest United States, has implemented a dockless system that emphasizes service in communities that have not been well-served by more traditional means of mass transit. While the city’s docked bikeshare system was shut down because of low ridership, the nearly one year old dockless offerings are doing better—strong regulations and designated bike parking zones are helping to more seamlessly integrate dockless bikeshare into the city’s transport network.

Other highlighted cities include:

* **Dublin**, which was one of the first European cities to adopt a code of conduct to regulate dockless bikeshare. While dockless bikeshare remains relatively nascent with only one operator in downtown Dublin, the city’s docked system, Dublinbikes, continues to be well-used, at 5.6 daily trips per bike, and accessible, at 13 bikes per 1,000 residents.
* **Guangzhou**, which received much notoriety for large piles of [discarded dockless bikes](https://www.itdp.org/st-mag-private-public-bikeshare/), issued technical guidelines for dockless systems and adapted the docked system to better compete with dockless offerings. The city has an estimated 57 bikes per 1,000 residents, while ITDP experts see more success with a lower ratio of 10-30 bikes per 1,000.
* **Montreal**, which opened one of the first docked systems, BIXI, in North America in 2009. In late 2017, dockless operator DropBike began operations in the city, aiming to complement and not compete with BIXI’s service offerings.
* **Paris**, which set the standard for docked bikeshare in major cities with its Velib’ system, recently expanded with new stations and bicycles—including pedal-assist e-bikes—while also allowing dockless bikeshare to operate. The lack of formal regulations to manage dockless operations has been cited as a reason why several operators have experienced widespread vandalism of their fleets.
* **Washington, DC**, which recently extended its dockless pilot program as the city government grapples with how the system should be regulated long-term. Critics and policy experts agree that [stronger data requirements](https://ddot.dc.gov/release/ddot-extends-dockless-demonstration-project) will be key to improving the service offering.

“The one thing to keep in mind with dockless bikeshare is that this is still a recent innovation,” concluded Yanocha. “In order to transition this innovation to an established, reliable service, cities need to step up and demand that private bikeshare operators share their data and comply with other requirements that preserve public space and protect users. If operators don’t want to work with cities to meet these standards and provide a high-quality service for users, then cities should consider looking at alternatives for providing bikeshare.”

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The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy works around the world to design and implement high quality transport systems and policy solutions that make cities more livable, equitable, and sustainable. ITDP provides technical expertise to accelerate the growth of sustainable transport and urban development around the world, to improve the quality of life for people in cities.

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