

March 19, 2018

City of Milwaukee  
Equal Rights Commission  
200 E. Wells Street  
City Hall, Room 606  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Board of Commissioners:  
Commissioner Jeffery Roman, Chair  
Commissioner Chez Ordoñez, Co-Chair  
Commissioner Mayhoua Moua  
Commissioner Tony Snell  
Commissioner Sheila Ashley

SUBJECT: City of Milwaukee Bike Share System Accessibility

Dear Board of Commissioners:

The Department of Public Works (DPW) shares a great interest in developing an adaptive bike share program in the City of Milwaukee that effectively accommodates the abilities of a broader range of people than what is currently offered. Adaptive bicycles can be designed to accommodate specific levels of ability, and include hand-cycles, three-wheeled cycles (tricycles), recumbent cycles, tandems, a four-wheeled cycle and the DUETs (combo wheelchair and cycle). A larger variety of options will undoubtedly increase the number of individuals exposed to cycling for transportation and recreation. This memo summarizes DPW's research of peer communities providing adaptive bike share programs and outlines a short-term and a long-term recommendation to provide accessibility to adaptive bikes in our City.

The City of Milwaukee currently owns bike share equipment (stations and bikes) that was purchased from BCycle and is operated as a part of the compatible Bublr Bikeshare system. Bublr, being the non-profit organization that operates the system, procured their equipment from the vendor BCycle as well. While BCycle doesn't offer adaptive bike options that are compatible with their docking system at this time, we believe there are other ways to develop and integrate an adaptive bike share program into the City of Milwaukee.

In an effort to learn from others, DPW staff has conducted research of peer communities and reached out to several adaptive bicycle experts both locally and nationally. Based on this research, adaptive bike programs in Portland, Oregon and Detroit, Michigan have emerged as clear leaders within the bike share industry. Efforts in Portland have been undertaken by the city's Bureau of Transportation (PBOT); whereas, the program in Detroit has been led by the bike share operator MoGo. While additional research may be necessary, three primary themes emerged from the research:

1. **Community Engagement.** In both Portland and Detroit, interest in improving accessibility to the bike share system began during community engagement activities. Locally, Wauwatosa's Adaptive Bike Station, launched in June 2017, was borne out of conversations among key community groups including the Milwaukee County Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Wauwatosa Committee for Citizens with Disabilities. In each case, the essential first step was to organize a group of individuals including persons with disabilities (including advocates and adaptive bicycle users), municipal staff, and bike share operators. These efforts have proven crucial in identifying a functional and an effective approach for the communities involved.

Some communities have also supplemented workgroup activities with in-person and online surveys to solicit broader feedback on the significance of specific barriers and challenges to accessibility to the bike share system. For example, the community engagement efforts in Portland identified three major priorities for its adaptive bike program: 1) a staffed service was preferred, 2) a place to keep mobility aids and service animals was important, and 3) potential users were more interested in riding on multi-use paths separated from motor vehicles. Both programs in Portland and Detroit offer services on a reservation basis to ensure that the best equipment and instruction is provided based on a particular individual's abilities. While these priorities may or may not apply to Milwaukee, they demonstrate the level of valuable feedback that could be expected in similar engagement and how it can shape a solution to accessibility.

2. **Key Partnerships & Champions.** As could be expected from meaningful community engagement, collaboration also identifies key champions and forges strong partnerships intent on developing a successful and sustainable program. In other cities, collaboration among persons with disabilities, advocates, decision makers, bike share operators, bike shop owners, and others resulted in programs uniquely tailored to best serve the communities engaged and to work toward achieving mutual goals.

As is the case with any bike share program, appropriate operating funds, staff time, materials, and other resources are needed to properly manage, operate, and maintain the program. In Portland and Detroit, partnerships with local bike shops having experience with adaptive bicycles has proven mutually beneficial for developing a sustainable program while supporting local businesses.

Furthermore, in these examples, multidisciplinary collaboration demonstrated broad community support and "buy-in" that attracted additional sponsorship opportunities for the bike share and adaptive bicycle programs that will likely contribute to long-lasting, sustainable accessible programs. With wide, positive reception from the community and strong sponsorship, these programs are well-positioned to expand beyond the initial launch.

3. **Pilot Adaptive Bike Program.** In the examples discussed, workgroup participants concluded that in the absence of accessible bike share equipment, developing a separate adaptive bike program is a progressive measure to provide access to bicycling until a better, integrated solution is available for the overall bike share system. In both Portland and Detroit, the pilot adaptive bike programs procured adaptive bicycles, outlined roles and responsibilities through agreements, developed a bicycle reservation system, and established clear goals and objectives for the duration of the pilot. For example, Detroit's adaptive bike program will develop rider profiles (i.e., track common experiences based on types of adaptive bicycle use) to intentionally fine-tune the program in subsequent years. Additionally, both Portland and Detroit's programs include training for users to address concerns raised through community engagement and to increase safety and comfort while using the adaptive bicycles. Lastly, by establishing an end date for the pilot, a process is created to evaluate the performance of the program (i.e., how effective is it for improving accessibility).

### **Short-term Goals**

Based on success and positive reception of these examples, DPW recommends implementing a pilot adaptive bike program in Milwaukee as a short-term, progressive effort to improve accessibility to bicycling and bike share. DPW proposes the following steps to implement a pilot program in 2018:

1. The City will form an Adaptive Bike Program Workgroup that will help identify partners, develop an effective approach for a pilot program, identify potential resources and funding, determine number and types of adaptive bicycles, and assist in implementation. The workgroup will include, but not be limited to, persons with disabilities, disability rights advocates, ERC representative(s), municipal staff, bike shop owners/staff, bike share operators, community partners, healthcare providers, and other nonprofit organizations. DPW staff, working closely with the City's ADA Coordinator, will also support additional engagement and outreach as the workgroup identifies opportunities.

**Target Date:** First meeting by April 27, 2018

2. Dependant on the recommendations and outcomes of the Adaptive Bike Program Workgroup, the City will issue a Request for Quotes to procure adaptive bicycles and equipment for a pilot adaptive bike program. Through collaboration with the workgroup, an operator(s) will be identified and partnerships will be formalized through agreements as appropriate. At this time, DPW has identified a few prospective operators.

**Target Date:** Equipment procured as soon as vendor is selected with a target date of August 1, 2018

3. Once agreements are in place with the operator(s), the pilot adaptive bike program will begin. Ideally, the program will include training and events to encourage participation and continual feedback.

**Target Date:** Program operational by Late Summer/Fall 2018

4. As a part of the City's Phase 2 bike share expansion project that will begin during the development of a pilot adaptive bike share program, the City and workgroup should continue to explore opportunities for refining the pilot program, strengthening partnerships, fundraising and further integrating into the overall bike share system.

**Target Date:** Phase 2 planning by Fall/Winter 2018-19

### **Long-term Goals**

As previously shared, DPW supports a long term vision of a bike share system that is accessible for everyone. Through our review of programs in peer cities, many communities have concluded that the current bike share industry offers limited options for improving access and adaptive bike share equipment needs to be further develop to more easily integrate into existing bike share systems. In the cases of Portland and Detroit, instituting an adaptive bike program in partnership with their current bike share operator is viewed as a progressive step toward improving access while better solutions are developed. Developing a program in step with the overall bike share system provides an opportunity to foster an adaptive cycling community that will provide feedback toward realizing integrated solutions for the overall systems. This approach also mitigates potential dissonance between competing systems and works toward mutual goals to best meet public needs.

While the pilot adaptive bike program is developed and implemented, DPW will continue to work with community partners and operator(s) to integrate adaptive equipment as it becomes available and continually strive for greater accessibility for all levels of ability. As a part of the City's Phase 2 bike share expansion project, DPW will include the Adaptive Bike Program Workgroup in the public and stakeholder involvement effort. We will also explore opportunities to improve accessibility to the overall bike share system throughout the planning and design process. All future phases will evaluate and explore opportunities to ensure access to the system to the greatest extent possible.

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In summary, DPW is excited to move forward with organizing an Adaptive Bike Program Workgroup and develop a pilot adaptive bike program that can start operations in 2018. We will continue to explore measures to improve accessibility to the overall bike share system. In the meantime, the proposed adaptive bike program will develop key partnerships, foster an adaptive cycling community and ensure a more successful sustainable program.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact me at (414) 286-2400 or via email at [jpolen@milwaukee.gov](mailto:jpolen@milwaukee.gov).

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Polenske, PE  
City Engineer

JSP/clm

c: Ms. Sharon Robinson, Department of Administration  
Ms. Rebecca Rabatin, Department of Administration  
Ms. Jessica Langill, Department of Administration  
Mr. Ghassan Korban, Department of Public Works  
Ms. Karen Dettmer, Department of Public Works  
Mr. Rollin Bertran, Department of Public Works  
Mr. James Hannig, Department of Public Works