

Bratislava white bike sharing v.02 (testing)

We are now in the testing phase of our project. First, we ordered some nice heavy bike U-locks from OnGuard. Because Bratislava is a big city and we are afraid to do it the same way as it was done in Amsterdam by Provo ;). However, there was an attempt like this in the past, as you can read on the wikipedia. In 2001, not-for-profit organisation BiCyBa released White Bicycles into public use in Bratislava, Slovakia. During the next three months all the bikes were stolen or destroyed, and the project was cancelled. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicycle_sharing_system // Because of this we are doing it different. There is a closed group of people to use the white bikes. Members are mostly from Bikekitchen initiative which is a community based voluntary workshop place. They are repairing the bikes and managing the whole project. Part of the bikekitchen members are also active in a bicycle advocacy NGO called Cyklokoalicia,

They have made a lot of progress in bicycle culture, due to a fact that staff at the City Council does not know much about bicycle culture. Basically, the first members of white bike sharing v01 (testing) are from these 2 groups which comes up to around 60 people. The second group of users will be people who are supporting pro-bike activities in Bratislava as volunteers - they will receive a lock code. The last group are tourists and Erasmus students, who can use the system, but they have to visit us and firstly speak with us a little bit. It will be something like check-up, we would like to get to know them and them to know us.

At the moment there are 40 white bikes in the streets of Bratislava, 4 are situated in outdoor places and we are testing the locks and community. They are working properly, we just made some minor repairs in the hubs.

After some weeks of testing, we feel quite prepared for the project but, we decided that for the winter we will start with non-promotional settings, with no advertisement at all.

The white bikes have 3 stickers on the middle tube: 1. NGO Cyklokoalicia, 2. Initiative Bikekitchen (maintaince and coordination) and 3. Rotary Club (white bikes donor and our supporter).

At the moment we realized that we have a problem with the lock holders. The U-locks are great but when it´s freezing the plastic holders are not as functional as we would need, they break off and cannot be repaired.

We are also planning to take the white bikes to some big festivals in the summer, to promote the initiative and help us make more contacts.

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