





Taipei City, Taiwan

# Taipei

## BUILDING A CYCLING CITY

**I**n a bid to reduce traffic congestion and ease environmental pollution in the city, the Taipei City government launched a public bicycle-sharing scheme called YouBike in 2009 to promote cycling among its residents. Former mayor **Dr Lung-Bin Hau** shares how the city overcame initial challenges to popularise the YouBike scheme, improve the lives of its citizens, and in the process, propel Taipei City into the global limelight for its efforts.



### The Challenge

Taipei City has prided itself on being an environmentally friendly city and the city government has declared green transportation as one of its priorities. In Taipei, there are, on average, more than one million motorcyclists commuting from New Taipei City to Taipei daily. If residents can be encouraged to use public transport and to use bicycles for the last mile of travel, the city will be able to improve its resource efficiency while making the environment cleaner and more liveable.

Getting the public to understand the full extent of the negative side effects that private transportation generates was one of the major challenges faced in making the transition to greener forms of transport. These effects included the impact on the environment, the increase in local air pollution and traffic congestion.

A multi-pronged strategy was required to increase the awareness among residents of the externalities of private transport and to make public transportation more convenient, affordable and accessible than private cars.

<sup>01</sup> Traffic conditions in Taipei City, 2006.





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01 Electric buses with tracking services play an important role in Taipei City's transportation system.

02 One of the pioneer YouBike stations, photographed in March 2009.

03 Dr Hau Lung Bin cycling on a YouBike.

04 The refinements in the Youbike scheme saw more bicycles available for rent at more stations throughout Taipei City.

05 Renting a YouBike can be done easily at YouBike kiosks, with an EasyCard or mobile phone.

## The Solution

The first step taken by the city government was to review and rationalise usage fees such as parking for private vehicles. It reduced the road area allocated to private motor vehicles and increased the space set aside for walking and cycling needs. The government also implemented the environmentally-friendly Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT) rail network, as well as an electric bus system.

Next, the government made moves to improve first- and last-mile transport services by setting up a public bicycle-sharing scheme called YouBike and by

enhancing the pedestrian walkways. The latest advances in information technology were also integrated into the transport system, providing commuters with bus-tracking information. The government also allowed inter-city express coaches on highways.



YouBike was first launched in March 2009 in the Xinyi District to a slow start. Several factors made the scheme unpopular. With only 500 bicycles provided at 11 stations, coverage was limited. Registration was also difficult, and the cost of using the bikes was comparable with the other modes of public transportation.

With the lessons learnt from the initial launch, and by adapting best practices gleaned from studying other countries, the government made improvements to the YouBike scheme. More stations were built in August 2012, and the registration process simplified. The cost of rental was also significantly lowered.

The first wave of extensions saw an addition of 30 rental sites and 960 bicycles throughout Taipei. Today, anyone with an EasyCard (a stored-value smartcard for travel within Taiwan) or mobile phone can go online to register as a YouBike member and then use an EasyCard to rent a bicycle.

Initially, the rental rate was NT\$10 per half hour – significantly cheaper than taking a taxi. To further encourage the use of YouBike, the Environmental Protection Administration decided to cover the cost of the first 30 minutes of every trip. This enabled commuters to simultaneously save money and do their bit for the environment.

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- 01 Taipei's public transport.
- 02 Taipei citizens on Youbikes.
- 03 Taipei citizens cycling along the river.
- 04 Taipei citizens on bicycles.

## The Outcome

These improvements have significantly boosted the popularity of YouBike and since July 2014, the scheme has been made available in all 12 of Taipei's administrative districts. By the end of 2014, 6,406 bicycles at 196 stations had been set up to serve commuters. In total, about 33 million trips have been made with YouBike, with the monthly average at two million rides. With YouBike's increasing popularity, the use of bicycles has increased by 24% since 2011.

Taipei's efforts in boosting green transportation have since been reported widely and is well regarded even outside Taiwan. As a reflection of the recognition it has gained, Taipei won the right to



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host the Velo-city Global Summit 2016, an international planning conference on cycling founded by the European Cyclists' Federation. Taipei is now also considered a role model for other Asian cities, with more than 60 cities in the continent including Tokyo, Seoul, Penang and Xuzhou, expressing interest in learning about the YouBike scheme.

Today, Taipei boasts a more integrated and sustainable mobility network, mainly due to the improvements in public transportation implemented in the recent years. Residents' mindsets are also changing and many of them are purchasing their own bicycles to travel around the city,

both for commuting and as a leisure activity during the weekend, cycling along the riverside bicycle lanes.

Despite the successful results achieved in the past three years, the government is not resting on its laurels. It is determined to raise the proportion of Taipei residents who use bicycles in the last mile of their journey from 5% today to 12% by 2020. If it achieves this goal, the city's total carbon dioxide emissions would fall from two million tonnes per year in 2012 to 1.89 million tonnes per year.



**Dr Lung-bin Hau** was inaugurated as Mayor of Taipei City in 2006. He was committed to enhancing Taipei citizens' quality of life. During his term, Taipei was awarded the hosting rights of the 2009 Deaflympics, the 2010 Taipei International Flora Expo and the 2011 Taipei World Design Alliance. Dr Hau also enabled direct flight services from Taipei Songshan Airport to cities across the Taiwan Strait, and developed Taipei into a major Asian tourist city.

Find out more of Dr Hau's thoughts on Taipei's cycling culture in his interview with CLC during the WORLD CITIES SUMMIT:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDraFEIrpGg>



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