

A free ride to a green recovery



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Evaluation report into free bike share
initiatives in Glasgow and Edinburgh,
June - September 2020

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supporting shared transport

Executive summary

In summer 2020, CoMoUK established a partnership with Transport Scotland, Glasgow City Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Transport for Edinburgh, and bike share operators, nextbike and Serco, to provide access to bike share in Scotland's two largest cities.

The initiative aimed to get more people cycling for everyday journeys, particularly people who don't own a bike or have anywhere to store one. It also provided a Covid-safe way to get around whilst helping ease pressure on a constrained public transport system.

In Glasgow, the first 30 minutes of standard cycle hire was free for the rider, with no limit on the number of times the offer could be used. In Edinburgh, the first 30 minutes of bike hire was free for riders for an initial period of two weeks, after which, a four-month, unlimited 'back to work' pass was made available for £10. Free 30 minute bike share trips were also offered over the same period in Stirling, which was funded by Cycling Scotland. This report does not look at the results of the scheme in Stirling.

Key findings:

- Overall, bike share trips increased by 38%, across both cities, from June - September 2020, compared to the same period in 2019
- It attracted 18,000 new users, many of whom hadn't cycled for a year or longer

- 61% of survey respondents said bike share was the trigger to start cycling again
- 74% said that they were cycling more often as a result of the bike share promotions
- 1 in 10 users said they had gone on to buy their own bike after using the scheme
- The main reasons for using the scheme were for fun and gaining fresh air, making travel easier, exercise and as an alternative to public transport during the Covid-19 pandemic

These figures are underpinned by the personal stories of the people who have benefited from using bike share, which are detailed in this report. They illustrate the crucial role that bike share plays in our wider public transport system.

Bike share supports numerous key public policies, including helping to cut transport emissions, improving public health and providing lower cost options for getting around.

It removes some of the barriers to cycling including the cost of buying

and maintaining a bike, and having somewhere to store one.

It is a carbon free way to get around, mainly used for short trips, and provides an accessible means for physical activity for many.

As a result, bike share can play a crucial role in our green recovery from Covid-19.

The key findings of this initiative, outlined in greater detail in this report, demonstrate both the effectiveness of targeted interventions and the need to provide greater support to bike share schemes in order to ensure that everyone across Scotland has access to bikes and all the advantages they bring.

In order to make that happen, CoMoUK recommends:

- Recognising bike share as an essential part of our public transport system
- Providing multi-year funding to help get bike share schemes off the ground and financially sustainable in the longer term
- Investing in social inclusion bike share initiatives to increase access to bikes in areas of multiple deprivation



Ridership data

Overview

In Glasgow, the first 30 minutes of standard cycle hire was free for the rider, and this was extended to 60 minutes for existing members - with no limit on the number of times the offer could be used.

In Edinburgh, the first 30 minutes of bike hire was free for riders for an initial period of two weeks, after which, a four-month, unlimited, discounted 'back to work' pass was made available for £10 to encourage the long-term uptake of cycling.

The promotions were successful in their objectives, attracting new people to bike sharing as well as increasing the number of trips made by the schemes overall. Bike share trips increased by

38%, across both cities, from June - September 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. During this time there were 18,000 new users of the scheme, many of whom had not cycled for a year or longer.

Making comparisons between the two cities is difficult as the promotions differed, the existing use patterns of the schemes differed, and the Edinburgh scheme expanded significantly since 2019. However, Glasgow appeared to have attracted more new users to the scheme and Edinburgh to have encouraged more repeat rides which fits with the change in strategy from offering one off free rides to the £10 discounted 4-month pass.



THE NUMBER OF BIKE SHARE TRIPS INCREASED BY

38%



BIKE SHARE USERS INCREASED BY OVER

18,000

Glasgow

After the initial lockdown period was over, in the period from June to September, Glasgow saw an uplift in trips of an average of 21%. The funded special offers had an impact on attracting new people into use of bike share. In Glasgow, 69,456 30-minute trips were funded through the initiative, which resulted in an uplift in unique users. Over

the 4 month period there were 17,033 new users (88% average increase), nearly double that of 2019.

As the trip numbers didn't increase at the same rate this may indicate that some existing customers (most likely those previously commuting several days a week) were not riding as

often, whilst both new and existing riders were doing more occasional leisure and utility trips.

The success of the scheme has led to it being extended until the end of March 2021, which will hopefully continue to attract new users and embed longer term behavioural change.

Data for June to Sept	Glasgow
Funded 30-minute trips	69,456
Average uplift in users per bike / per month compared to 2019	33
% increase in users, compared with 2019	88%
Number of new users	17,033
New users as % of passes	25%
Average additional trips per month from 2019	6,479
% increase in trip numbers, compared with 2019	21%



THE NUMBER OF BIKE SHARE TRIPS INCREASED BY

21%



BIKE SHARE USERS INCREASED BY

88%

Edinburgh

In Edinburgh, a total of 6,436 30-minute free trips were taken up by local residents and 953 'back to work' passes were purchased, which resulted in a further 17,996 trips being made.

These initiatives combined resulted in even higher increases in the number of

trips than in Glasgow. On average over the 4 month period there was a 74% increase in trips.

The uplift in riders was lower than Glasgow but still an impressive 64%. These figures have been adjusted to allow for the increase in fleet numbers since 2019.

The results show that the combination of passes in Edinburgh have attracted new people to cycling as well as encouraging repeat use.

Data for June to Sept	Edinburgh
Funded 30-minute trips	6,436
Back to work pass trips	17,996
Total	24,432
Average uplift in users per bike / per month compared to 2019	8
% increase in users, compared with 2019*	64%
Number of new users	1,252
New users as % of passes	5%
Average additional trips per month from 2019*	11,836
% increase in trip numbers, compared with 2019*	74%

*pro-rated to adjust for increased fleet



THE NUMBER OF BIKE SHARE TRIPS INCREASED BY

74%



BIKE SHARE USERS INCREASED BY

64%

“ Me and my wife decided to join the scheme during lockdown. We wanted to keep healthy instead of just sitting on our backsides watching TV. Fresh air and exercise cycling has certainly helped with weight loss and well being. ”

“ I use the bike share as my main mode of transport mainly for personal business and leisure. What I like about the scheme the most is that I do not need to take my bike (and maintain it), and the scheme also gives me a freedom to change the mode of transport to train or bus in case the weather changes and it starts raining heavily. ”

“ I'm not ready to get back on a bus yet so bike share is filling that gap. We also don't have a car since we live so central and haven't needed one. I'm lucky to live next to an entrance to the Water of Leith and can take the path all the way to Roseburn to visit my parents, then the other way to the shore to visit my sister. When the roads were quiet during lockdown we were using the cycles to go to bigger shops to do our weekly shop. ”

Survey results

We conducted a survey of bike share users who had signed up because of the 30-minute free rides promotion and the 'back to work pass' to gain a better understanding of travel behaviours and trip purposes. A total of 289 people responded to the survey.

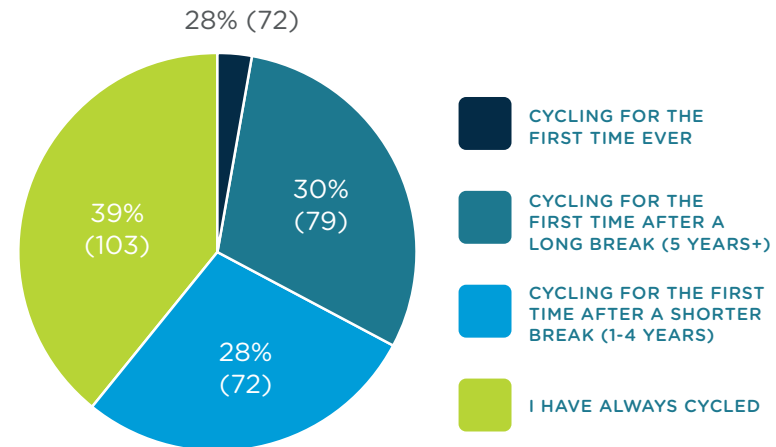
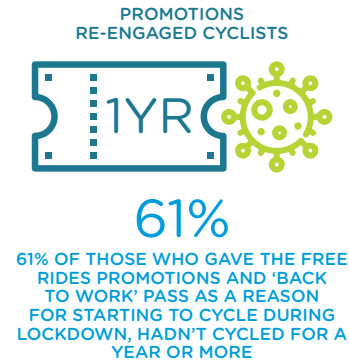


“ I'm a teacher and was working from home during the pandemic. The bikes helped my mental health as I was able to use them for free and it was a great way to break up the day and explore my city from a different angle. ”

“ It's a great way to get around the city. I've been using a lot since the start of the pandemic especially with the first 30 minutes being free. ”

Catalyst to cycling

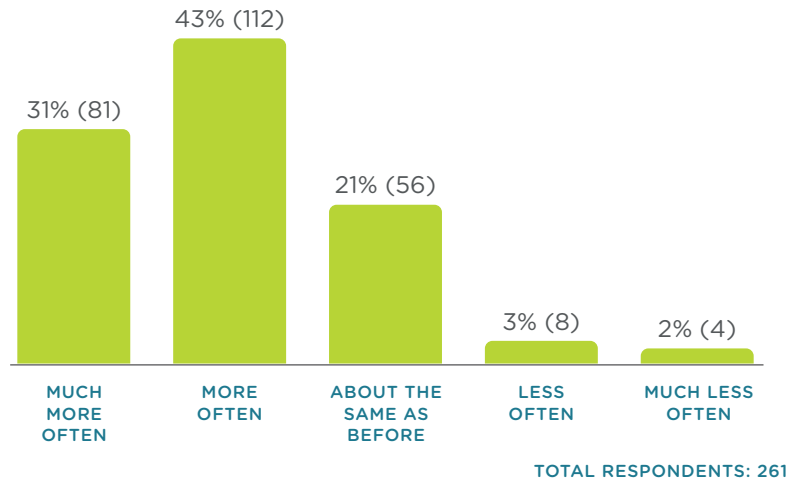
The survey looked at whether the people who were new to bike share were also new to cycling. 61% (158) of those taking advantage of the promotions were not already cycling, 3% (7) started cycling for the first time, 30% for the first time after a 5+ year break (79) and the remaining 28% (72) after a shorter break of 1-4 years. However it should be noted that this is a relatively small group to make statistically significant conclusions.



If this percentage was to be extrapolated to the wider group who were recorded as new to the bike share systems (18,265) it is estimated that over 500 people would have been cycling for the first time.

Increased cycling frequency

The majority of respondents (74%) stated that they were cycling more often as a result of the bike share promotion.



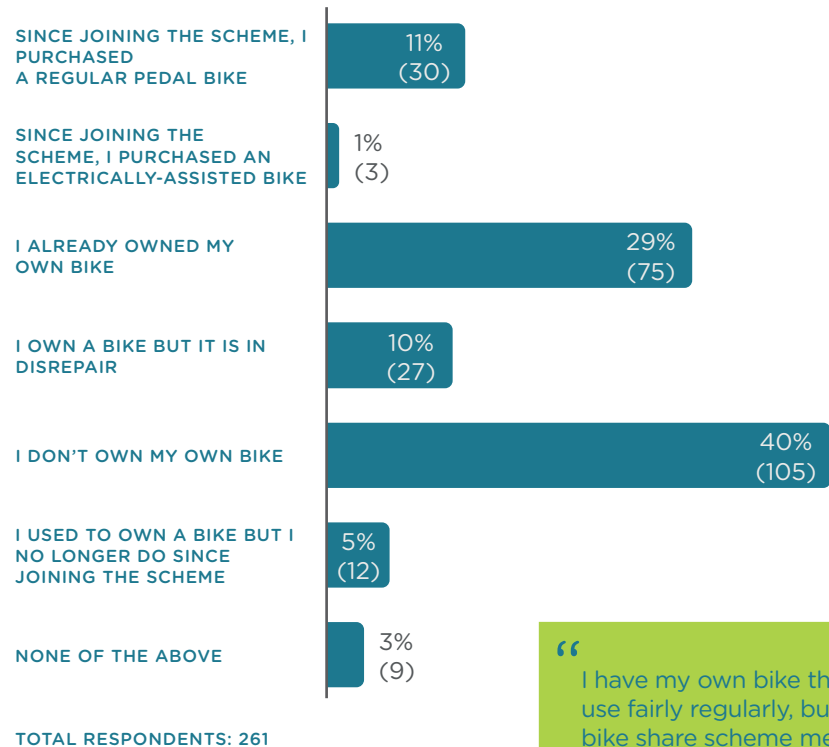
“ I first used Nextbike after a 15+ year break from cycling. The first time was a bit terrifying but my old love of cycling soon came back to me. Now I cycle several times a week. It’s helped me to become more confident as a cyclist. I use it around the park and along designated cycle paths, and sometimes I even brave the roads! I’m now looking into getting a bike of my own but I think having Nextbike in the city is a great solution to make cycling a more visible alternative to other less environmentally friendly forms of transport. Also, it’s fun!



74%
SAID THAT THEY WERE CYCLING MORE OFTEN AS A RESULT OF THE BIKE SHARE PROMOTION

Bike purchase

Bike share is often a route into buying a bike which can replace or compliment bike share use. Of this sample who had responded to the promotions 33 went on to buy a bike.



“ I have my own bike that I use fairly regularly, but the bike share scheme means I can be more flexible - I might cycle to meet a friend for a walk and not worry about taking my bike everywhere, or I can have a drink and come back by train.

Personal benefits of opting to travel by bike share

Respondents were asked to choose 'all that applied' from a list of reasons for using the bike share scheme. 'Fun and gaining fresh air', 'making travel easier' and 'exercise' were the top three reasons for choosing bike share. The response - using bike share as an alternative to public transport during the Covid-19 pandemic - was chosen by 48% of respondents.



71%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED ON EXERCISE/PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS AS REASONS WHY THEY CHOOSE TO USE THE BIKE SHARE SCHEME



68%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT BIKE SHARE GAVE THEM A TIME FOR FUN AND FRESH AIR



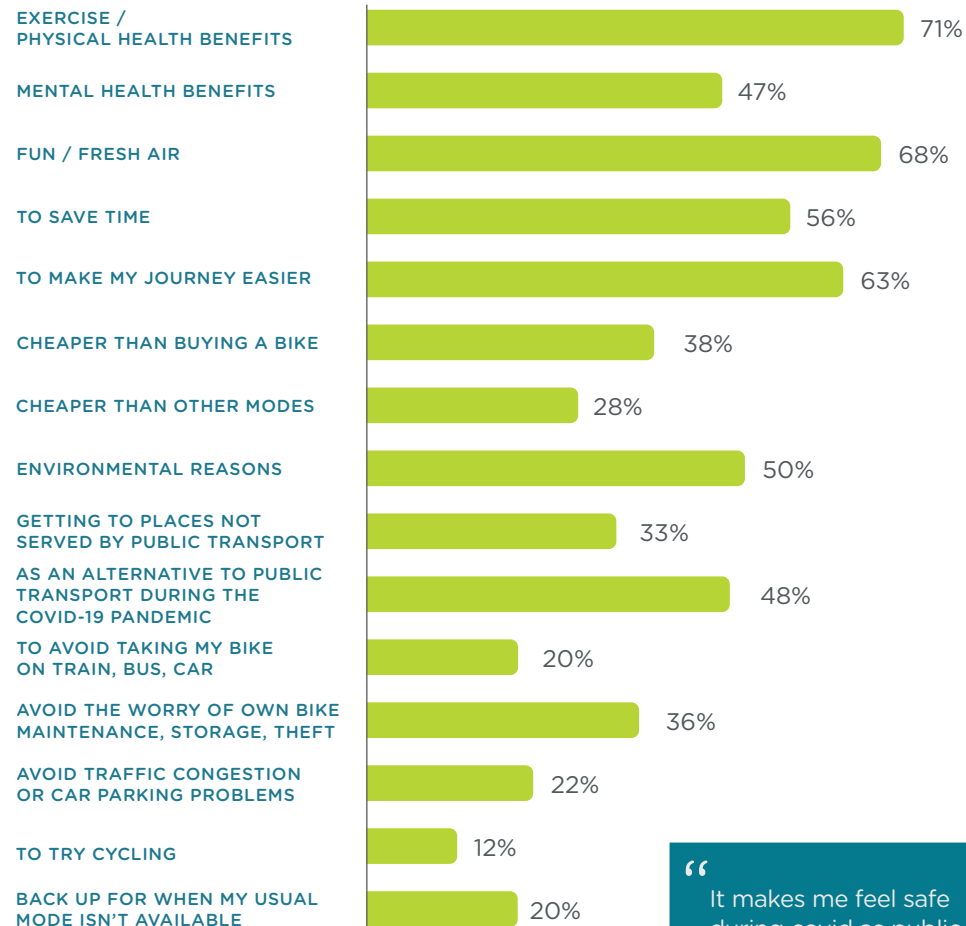
63%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT BIKE SHARE MADE THEIR JOURNEY EASIER



48%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT BIKE SHARE WAS A GOOD ALTERNATIVE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



“ It makes me feel safe during covid as public transport with a lot of people in it doesn't sound very safe. ”

Trip purpose

Respondents were asked how often they use bike share for a range of different journey purposes. The responses were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which led to many people working from home during the time of collecting responses (2nd June - 22nd September).

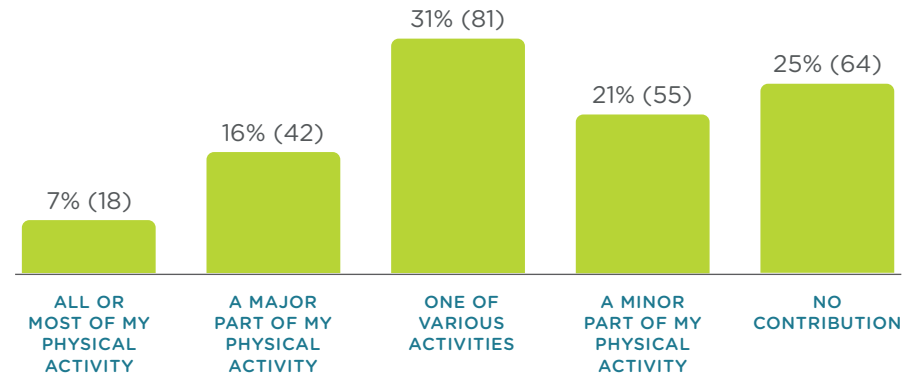
The 2020 results show that the main trip purposes were leisure trips (38% did this at least once a week), personal business such as visiting the shops (62% of users did this at least once a month) and visiting family and friends (57% did this at least once a month).

29% of this group used bike share to travel to work at least once a week.

	3+ DAYS PER WEEK	1-2 DAYS PER WEEK	1+ DAYS PER MONTH
Commuting to work	11.98% (29)	16.94% (41)	15.29% (37)
Business travel/ part of job	4.26% (10)	6.81% (16)	13.19% (31)
Cycling to a place of education	5.68% (13)	5.24% (12)	6.11% (14)
Personal business e.g. shops	9.36% (22)	22.55% (53)	29.79% (70)
Visiting friends and family	5.58% (13)	18.03% (42)	33.48% (78)
Cycling for leisure	10.25% (25)	27.87% (68)	30.33% (74)

Contribution to physical activity

When asked how much bike share has contributed to their total physical activity 23% that is was all or a major part of their weekly activity.



“ The bike share scheme has helped me immensely with my mental and physical health. I had my last bike stolen from outside my flat and can't afford to buy a new one, and having access to these bikes in a way that is affordable and still allows me to get out for fresh air and exercise has been so valuable - especially during lockdown - for getting me outdoors and active. ”



Additional Testimonials

“ I find the nextbikes great for one-way journeys (eg nipping into town to meet someone for a meal, returning from having dropped the car off for a service etc) as I can get from the West End to the city centre in under 30 minutes. I also use them for journeys where I wouldn't be particularly happy about leaving my own bike chained up in the street (eg Dentist). Several months in and I've still not had to pay a charge – this had become part of the fun! Using them is a different experience to my commuter bike or mountain bike – a more relaxed ride and the upright seating position gives you a different perspective. I've also not used a helmet or hi-viz, which is a bit liberating. My gut view and limited experience is that motorists tend to be more wary of nextbikes as “amateur” users. It's been great to see so many “non-cyclists” out on them over the year, enabling people to explore the city in a clean and health way – we need it!

”

“ Bike sharing and the promotions for free usage, especially those aimed at key workers, have made a great difference to the ease of getting to work during the pandemic for me - I have also been able to restart cycling for leisure and have not needed to get a bus or train since March.

”

“ I am a keen cyclist myself but have found myself using the free half hour lots due to logistics when providing child care. (it's very handy to drop off bike and not worry about locks/ walking with bike or lights etc). I also really appreciate not having to carry my bike up and down the stairs of my tenement! This scheme has saved me a great deal of money and has stopped me buying a car as my transport needs are covered. I also have told many friends about the free hire scheme and many of them have started cycling for first time in Glasgow.

”

“ I am a highly active 20 year old that is going into third year of law and economics and so finding means to maximise my efficiency with a busy time schedule is key to my daily routine. The bike share scheme has enabled me to reach work, education and leisure destinations under time pressure with little/no stress.

”

“ I really enjoy using the scheme. I cycle to the gym and get the bus back when I'm tired!!

”

“ I am a driving instructor and was unable to walk during the furlough so I took the opportunity to do more cycling. I used to be a keen cyclist before work and life got in the way! I really enjoyed the experience as some areas in Glasgow have a great cycling infrastructure but others not so much. It helps in my job to see things from another point of view in the current traffic climate and I can share the experiences to help others.

”

“ Love having a bike share right outside my flat. Now I have switched from train and car to cycling which increases my exercise as I travel. I don't even need to buy a bike!

”

“ I do not have any storage space for a bike. I would also feel concerned about maintenance. I generally use the bikes at weekends or summer evenings for leisure/fitness purposes.

”

“ I am currently unemployed and this initiative has helped me enormously.

”

“ I am a keen cyclist, and do most of my journeys in town during dry weather by bike. If my bike is in repair, or where I need to do a one way journey, I use the bike scheme, particularly now since the first 30 minutes are free.

”

“ Moved in with my partner during lockdown to make life easier for my family and my commutes to work. The bike hire scheme has helped me save money, time and maintain fitness while my own bike was off the road. I am now reducing my hours in the supermarket where I work as I return to university shortly, and will continue to use the scheme throughout.

”

“ I mainly use the bike share scheme to replace short car and bus journeys around Glasgow and Stirling. I do this to create less carbon emissions from my travel and to have greater flexibility about when I make these journeys. It's cheaper than getting a bus or train and easier to park than a car.

”



Find out more about our work at
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