

Campus Bike Programmers Conference Notes

Nov. 1 ~ 2, 2008

The morning session was held in the UC Davis' Bike Barn (BB in these notes) bike shop; the afternoon session at the UCD Transportation and Parking Svcs. Office. These notes have been compiled from multiple attendees.

Photos from the conference are [here](#); photos from the BB are [here](#); photos of the UC - Davis, Stanford and UC - Santa Cruz campuses are [here](#) & [here](#) (from early 2007).



Present: UConn students Kristin Sullivan, Tulsi Patel, Kevin Wilhelm; Ariadne Scott, Stanford Univ.; Tim Ledlie, Quad Bikes, Harvard; Christian Parker, Campus Bike Shop, Stanford; Robert St. Cyr, UCD BB; David Takemoto-Weerts, Bicycle Coordinator, UCD TAPS; Tim Potter, MSU Bikes & Peter Roper, CU-Boulder. Two others participated in the conference via phone: Sevgi Erdogan, Research Assistant for Campus Bicycle Plan, University of Maryland at College Park, and Beau Howard Baker, Clean Commute Program Manager, [Bridging The Gap](#), Kansas City, MO.

Operational basics:

- BB started in 1971 as a student run operation catering to students, more or less a co-op setup, loaning out tools and assisting students with repairing their own bikes.
- BB was an old barn, and never intended to be anything else; one of the oldest existing bldg's at UCD.
- MSU used some underutilized storage space in a basement for a few years until moving into their current space that used to be just for renting/ storing canoes.
- Quad Bikes gets both space and utilities for free from Harvard.
- CU-Boulder has a small [bike station](#) in the heart of their campus where folks can [rent bikes](#), [register their bikes](#), attend a [maintenance class](#), get access to tools for [DIY or assisted repairs](#).
- Stanford's Campus Bike Shop has been a private vendor operated bike shop since the 1930s in the center of campus; a great example of a win-win relationship.
- UC Santa Cruz (didn't attend) has been operating their bike co-op on campus as an all

volunteer student run operation since the mid 80's (pretty amazing).

-UMD has a Bike Shop in Outdoors Recreation Center(ORC), provides free maintenance and tools and rents mountain bikes. We are planning to extend it: opening a central shop and rent recycled and new bikes for long term.

Employees & other operational issues:

- BB's only full-time employee is Robert St. Cyr, the manager; all others (12 – 18 depending on the season) are students. He focuses on training employees to help run different aspects of the shop. BB's cashiers/ estimators all work their way from the back of the shop to the front so they have all the knowledge and experience to do the most accurate estimates minimizing mistakes.

- MSU has 1 full-time manager, 1 full-time asst. manager, 1 full-time head mechanic, 8 students (2 cashiers/ estimators, 6 mechanics).

- Robert tries to hire only fresh/soph students as they take approx. 2 yrs. to train completely. Students are required to work 12-17 hours/week.

- Quad Bikes used to have a model like the BB, with many students working part-time. Since students are often unreliable and cannot commit even ten hours a week, they are moving more to a model of fewer employees working more hours, which necessarily means fewer student employees.

- BB student mechanics are in high demand by area shops after they graduate as they are fully trained for servicing all types of bikes.

- The BB sells and rents used bikes to students, faculty, staff and visitors. They perform approx. 10,000 repairs annually making them one of the busiest bike shops in the USA. See this video for more info. on the BB operation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbK-9sT6QKA>

- CU-Boulder has 1 student working at their bike station.

- UMD has a GRA for campus Bike Program at Dept. of Transportation Services, Bike Shop is run by ORC (in the process if cooperating and bringing the sources together) with a student mechanic and volunteers.

Liability concerns:

- UCD is self-insured and doesn't have any addtl. special insurance for the BB. Has only had 1 incident that Robt' knows of since 1971 (someone sued for some repair they alleged the Bike Barn was supposed to do but the repair record showed differently, so they lost the complaint).

- MSU's legal dept. doesn't consider the risks associated with bicycling anything special, so the existing univ. liability insurance covers us.

- Harvard was very concerned about liability, so required Quad Bikes to be an independent business with its own insurance.

Bike rack / Bike locker issues:

- "Lightning Bolt" racks by Creative Pipe, are the best racks after 40 yrs. of trying all the others (http://www.creativepipe.com/lightning_bolt_LR_series_racks.htm). See photos here of other bike racks at UCD taken a couple years ago:

http://www.bikes.msu.edu/photo_gallery/calif-trip-07-web/

- MSU Bikes: replacing old racks with inverted loops; newest ones have a crossbar which reduces bikes falling all the way down. UCD doesn't like the loops as many students won't lock

2 to a loop and so capacity isn't as good as other racks. Take material and a good coating in consideration (some PVC coatings crack more easily than others and then the rack starts to rust). MSU (with cooperation from their parking office) has been fortunate to find some dead spots in 5 of their 6 car parking ramps to locate older style bike racks, so that people can at least get cover from the weather. MSU Bikes is just starting to explore bike lockers for campus; UCD already has a number of bike lockers installed (thanks to \$\$ for one of their newest car parking ramps); Stanford has a whole bunch with a standing waiting list.

- Harvard has also had success installing bike parking facilities in dead space of parking garages.
- UMD has several bike racks(interted-U type) near almost each building currently and in the planning phase for providing lockers and sheltered parking.

Rental bikes & selling bikes:

- BB has bought then rented out for a year or 2 Sun-brand cruiser bikes (a J&B brand) and then sold them as lightly used bikes. This keeps maintenance costs to a minimum (they're sold before they start developing more serious problems, much like rental car companies do with their cars).
- MSU has been fixing up abandoned or donated bikes and renting or selling them. They provide the general maintenance during the rental period (which is hourly thru annually); makes for a LOT of work and expense to do it this way, although the brownie-points with campus administrators and others interested in reducing waste, recycling is a strong point.
- Quad Bikes also refurbishes abandoned bikes, and although it's a lot of labor, refurb turns more profit than selling new bikes, and customers prefer buying refurbished bikes which are less likely to be stolen than new ones. Since abandoned bike monitoring / collection is not centralized or standardized at Harvard, it makes getting the abandoned bikes hard and ongoing work.
- CU- Boulder has a small fleet of very durable, higher end bikes that they rent out for short periods that come back regularly. They do no long term rentals.
- BB has had a restriction on selling new bikes for many years; however, they've begun selling some new framesets (Soma and Origin 8), some built up into complete bikes (mostly fixed-gear style). They do no advertising of these.
- UMD is in the process of starting a rental program and considering to use both recycled bikes (by refurbishing abandoned bikes) and new bikes --possibly a 75-100 new bikes at the beginning--. Experience from other campuses (using recycled vs.new bikes) will help us in deciding which way to go.

Shop Pricing:

- BB's prices for parts are pretty much the same as local bike shops to eliminate complaints of undercutting. (Labor rates weren't discussed)
- MSU Bikes has been charging considerably less (on a flat-rate markup basis) but is about to switch to an adjustable markup schedule to be closer to how local bike shops do their pricing as they've had some complaints from the LBS's about their low prices. MSU Bikes' labor rates are 20 -30% lower than LBS's.
- UMD Bike Shop does not provide parts but helps with maintenance once student provides the parts free of charge.

Air stations:

- BB has an air compressor station outside their shop; hoses are quick release type with no pressure gauges; hoses are brought in every night.
- MSU Bikes has air hoses (with built-in pressure gauges) permanently mounted outside which are heavily used thru the night; they've had no vandalism cases in over 2 years. Other locations around MSU have small electric air pumps (residence hall front desks), and a few have tapped into their building's air compressor (which often run their HVAC systems).
- CU – Boulder is exploring more durable air compressors for around campus.

Bike maps: everyone agreed that doing a bike map for your campus establishes a base-line of where you're at, shows gaps in the bike lanes, etc. Excellent exercise to go thru. MSU Bike's map (done a year ago) was based on graphics borrowed from UCD's (which were borrowed from the City of Portland): MSU's map is on the back of their brochure ([cover](#), [page 2](#), [back/ map](#)). **Harvard's maps are** available in the [Campus Bike Program's Yahoo group Files section](#); you need to subscribe to the group to access them. UCD's gorgeous new map can be downloaded & viewed [here](#). Stanford's maps are [here](#) (Mid Peninsula, PDF, 5 Mb) & here ([Pedestrian Pathways and Bikeways](#) (from Stanford University Community Plan)). UMD's map is not ready yet, it will be available mid or late January 2009.

Promotions: Robt. Said that the BB has the best success with large sales when he's got a good selection of bikes or whatever to choose from. He'll also take a loss on some stuff to bring in customers for the longer term (e.g. he makes up lots of wheel sets in various colors). MSU can't discount stuff, so they'll generally give away stuff that is labor or other non- inventory parts, like free bike/canoe rentals.

Bike repairing/safety classes: Robt. teaches a series of bike maintenance classes thru their Experimental College; Tim (MSU Bikes) teaches such classes thru their non-credit lifelong edu./ evening college. They're very popular and a good way to bring people into the shop during the winter months. Notes used in some of our classes available in the [Campus Bike Program's Yahoo group Files section](#); to access them you need to subscribe to the group.

Promote safe bicycling by giving away free stuff (or discounted stuff): Stanford has had police/ TAPS officers give away lights to students found riding at night without lights (UCD will issue tickets for such). Stanford had a program whereby a staff person would stop bicyclists wearing helmets and have them sign something entering them in a drawing for a \$1000 prize. They also did some creative PR campaigns with their on-campus bike shop (Campus Bike Shop) to sell nice helmets very cheap (close to cost?). Quad Bikes has had great success giving free bicycle safety checks / advice at beginning-of-year events, on-campus health and transportation fairs, and other public events. It's a great way to give back to the community while getting free advertising. MSU has also hosted many free bike events for beginning bike commuters, some women-only events, and other local community bike events (e.g. [Ride of Silence](#)) to contribute to local bike safety and advocacy efforts.

Incentives to advocate for more bicycling: Stanford also gives significant [\\$\\$ incentives](#) to people thru their [Commuter Club](#) who promise to commute via non-single occupant vehicles to

reduce congestion/ pollution (Stanford has to stay under certain # of cars on campus (they occasionally use hose counters to check #s of cars and bicyclists) to avoid big fines, so there's a financial incentive to avoid the fines). [Here's a couple photos of posters](#) from that campaign. UMD is at the beginning stage, it started free bike registration in Fall 2008 and gave free U-locks to first 200 registrants.

Make friends with professors, police officers, and people in high places: the more friends the better, especially within the administration or with people who might help you find space for a shop on your campus which is often the biggest challenge on older campuses. Sustainability offices are also growing in their influence on campuses and can be great partners in establishing a bike program (MSU Bike's co-founder was the director of Sustainability). Quad Bikes has a great relationship with the Harvard University Police since Quad Bikes maintains the patrol bikes. MSU Bikes also maintains their police dept. bikes as well as other fleets of dept.-owned bikes on campus. UMD has a Bicycle Advisory Group including representatives from administrative departments, five of them are also sponsors of the Bike Plan, DOTS, The Department of Public Safety, Residential Facilities, Resident Life, Facilities Management, and Recreation Services, Sustainability Office, City of College Park, and student groups.

Acquiring bikes: Working with your police dept. (or whomever in your area impounds bikes, if your campus does impounding) can be a great way to get lots of bikes for free (UCD still auctions their bikes 2x/ year; MSU sends their impound bikes to their salvage/ surplus dept. after 30 days [bikes with no permits], after 90 days [bikes with permits] and allows MSU Bikes to select the bikes they want for their rental program (or in some rare cases, resell). Other great ways to get lots of free bikes: contact your local off-campus apartment complexes for access to their abandoned bikes (MSU Bikes gets hundreds per year this way); ask your campus publications (student newspaper, newsletters to alumni, retired faculty, etc.) to publish solicitations for private bike donations; these are often the best bikes as they've been hanging in garages/ basements). Even asking your local community bike clubs to put notices in their newsletters can be a great way to get old bikes. Local sheriff departments generally impound lots of bikes; check with them to see if they'll donate them to your program.

Local community partnerships: invite local bike shops to partner with your campus to provide support, services, parts at wholesale (or wholesale plus shipping), or allow them to run the whole program (a local bike shop near UW Madison did this for years). Members of community bike clubs often have retirees or others interested in volunteering for wrenching or at least giving advice or assistance for special events, classes, etc.

Proposals:

- look at Harvard's: www.quadbikes.org/resources/text/QuadBikesFormalProposal.pdf (MSU based parts of their business plan on Quad Bikes')
- UW – Madison's proposal for their new bike center is an excellent document (quite new): go to the [Campus Bike Program's Yahoo group Files section](#) to see this and other great documents (you need to subscribe to the group to access them).

Other Bike program structures:

- If campus too small for bike shop, should consider a library system; campus library system might even be used for managing rental bikes (and could possibly be used to put holds on records for bikes not returned).
- Bike shares: (pick up and use a bike wherever you find it; typically painted the same color, unlocked) These programs are not sustainable for very long; after years of trying them all around the country and world; bikes end up stolen, damaged severely, in local rivers, etc.

Other great ideas:

- swipe student cards when loaning out tools, bikes, whatever (public info. on every card that has mag stripe; buy a cheap USB-mag card reader and check your campus student card and see what info. you can capture to help manage your operations).

Notes outline by Tulsi, UConn student; filled in with assistance from others in attendance.

c/o:

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