

# Bike-Sharing Catches On

People in Washington, D.C., now have a new way to travel short distances. The city recently became the first U.S. city to roll out a public bike-sharing program.

The program is called SmartBike DC and costs \$40 a year to join. Once people join, they can borrow one of 120 bright-red bicycles from ten bike racks around the city. Riders can use a bicycle for up to three hours at a time. When people are done riding, they return the bicycle to the nearest rack. If they need a bicycle for more than three hours, they can select another one.

“This program is going to replace cab rides and car trips for a lot of folks looking to get around the city quickly,” said Jim Sebastian, a manager for the District's Department of Transportation.

Bicycle-sharing already is popular in Europe. Paris, France, and Barcelona, Spain, have large bike-sharing programs. Paris has more than 20,000 bikes for rent at more than 1,400 places around the city.

Cycling has become more common over the past year as gasoline prices have increased. Many people also like traveling by bicycle because bikes don't pollute the air the way cars do.

## MORE FACTS ABOUT BICYCLE-SHARING

- To prevent the SmartBike bicycles from being stolen in D.C., they are locked electronically into bike racks. If a bicycle is not returned after 48 hours, the rider is charged a fee to replace it.
- A bicycle program like the one in D.C. can help reduce traffic tie-ups by 4 to 5 percent, one expert said.



### NEWS WORD BOX

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### THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Would your community benefit from a bike-sharing program?  
If you were in charge of such a program, where in your community  
would be some good spots to locate bike racks?