

# Allegheny College Bike Share

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## Our Mission

The Allegheny College Bike Share strives to provide an alternative mode of sustainable and healthy transportation to the student body through free checkout at the library. The Bike Share repairs and rebuilds used, donated bicycles to create a fleet of bicycles for student use; offers opportunities for students to learn bike maintenance and repair skills; and cultivates a strong biking culture in which cyclists, pedestrians, drivers and those differently-abled can each have fun, safe and equal access to transportation.

## Early History of the Bike Share Idea

The concept of a bicycle sharing program was originally conceived in Amsterdam in the early 1960's. A group of anarchists collected 50 bikes and painted them all white. Naming the project "White Bikes," the group placed the unlocked bicycles throughout the city. This attempt to create a free, democratic form of clean transportation was crushed by the city police when they confiscated all 50 bikes. They claimed that the "White Bikes" invited theft, even though the purpose of the project was to have people take and ride the bicycles! In response to the oppressive cops, the anarchists stole a number of police cars and claimed that the cops' carelessness with their vehicles "invited theft."

## Rise and Fall of the Original Bike Share Program

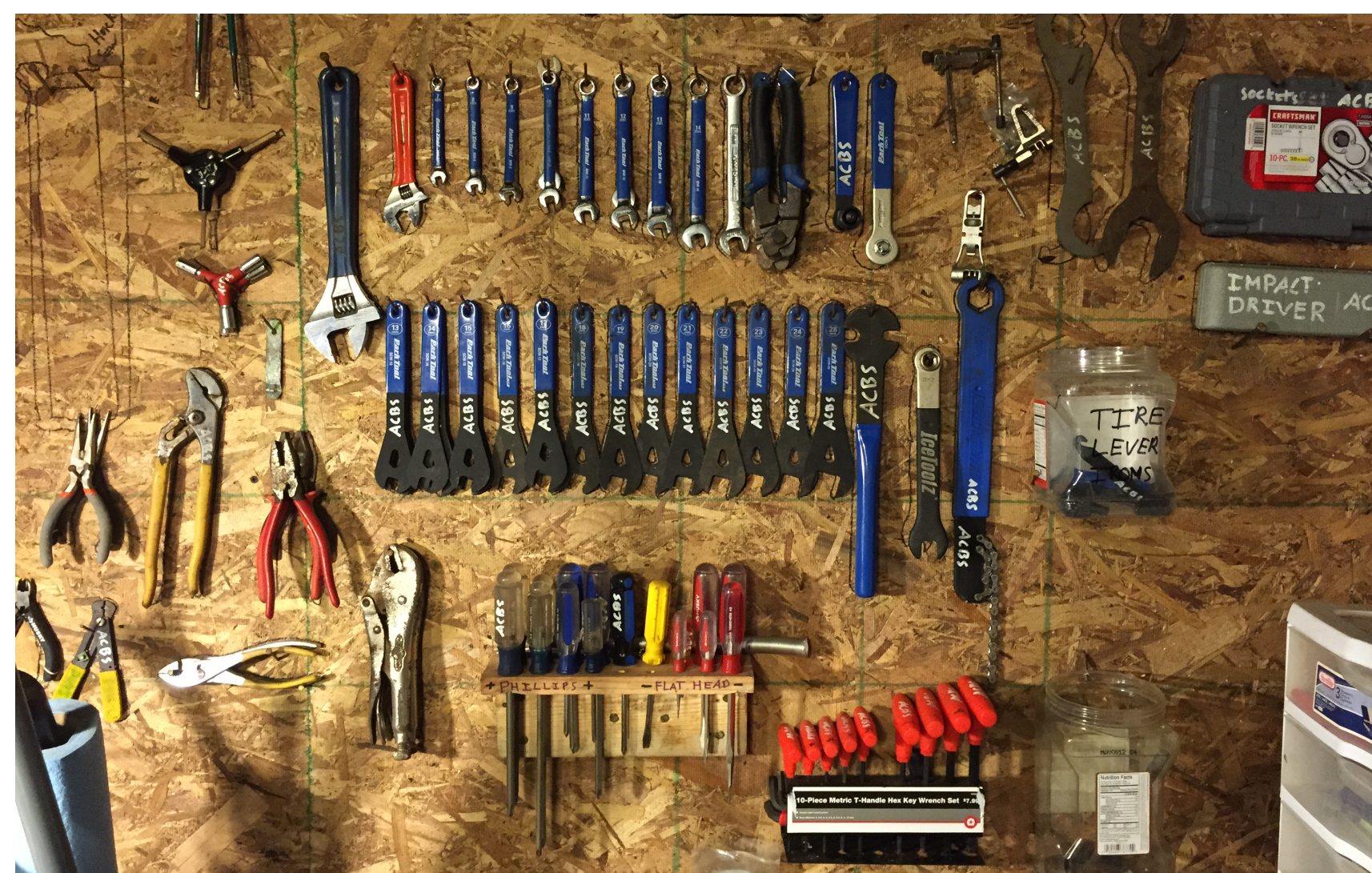
Skip forward a few decades and the first bike share program was established at Allegheny by a group of students following an international trend. Mirroring the Amsterdam anarchists, these students painted about 20 donated bicycles an ugly lime-green color and spread the bikes across campus. This time, instead of the cops stealing all the bikes, lazy students abandoned numerous bicycles in what Andy Walker, the Meadville City Manager, termed "the Allegheny students leave ugly green bikes around downtown and we have to clean them up program." Although a few still survive, the majority of the lime-green bicycles were eventually stolen by students, thrown into scrap metal bins, or lost in the madness.

## Birth of the New Allegheny College Bike Share

Fast forward another few years and a new generation of students enter Allegheny. Working closely with sustainability coordinator Kelly Boulton, as well as the Director of Physical Plant Cliff Willis, the Pelletier Library staff and a handful of professors, the current bike share was born. The program includes a fleet of donated bikes built, repaired, and maintained by student volunteers. The bikes, which vary in size and style, are housed at the Pelletier Library where students, staff, and faculty can check out any bike for free for a week at a time. The bikes can be found during the fall semester, over the summer, and after the snow melts during the spring semester. They are locked to custom bike racks made out of old bicycle frames that students stripped and welded together with the help of Physical Plant.



Bikes on a group ride at Senior Circle



A section of the tool wall in our workshop



Students making pedal-powered smoothies at a local foods festival



Above: Bike maintenance workshop hosted in the Campus Center  
Right: Some of the Bike Share fleet on a rack made from old bike frames

## The Workshop

In working with Physical Plant, the bike share has secured work space in the basement underneath the College's Gator Green Living Community house, as well as a two car garage down the street for storage. The basement is used to maintain the fleet of bike share bikes, host "learn how to fix your bike" workshops, share the use of tools for students with their own bikes, and spread a culture of bike positivity and knowledge. The workshop is fully equipped with air compressor, parts washer, professional bike stands, chemical resistant chemistry lab tables repurposed into work benches, wheel truing stand, vice, and a host of bike specific tools. Future planned shop upgrades include full LED workspace lighting and upgraded electrical system.

## Outreach

The Allegheny College Bike Share coordinates numerous outreach and awareness-raising events throughout the school year. The most regularly recurring of these are introductory bike maintenance workshops for students to learn how to maintain their personal machines under the tutelage of more experienced Bike Share mechanics. The goal with these workshops is not to fix a bike for the student, but rather to guide the student through the maintenance procedures such that they can perform it again on their own. Additionally, our mechanics created a bike-powered blender that has been traveling to various school events where students can make smoothies and milkshakes while learning about the bike share program. A grill mounted to a bike-pulled trailer is also in the works for cooking up veggie burgers, shish kabobs, and other stereotypical environmental science student meals. For the spring semester, we are planning a number of community bike rides on local trails and a through-campus "Alley Cat" style race/scavenger hunt.

## Next Steps

While the Allegheny College Bike Share is still building its user-base on campus, we have some big plans in the works. In the fall semester of 2016, we will expand our presence on campus with a fleet of electric-assist bicycles, recharged via renewable energy from an on-campus wind turbine. Funding for this student-initiated project will come from energy savings realized during this year's campus-wide Energy Challenge as well as donor contributions. Further, we intend to revamp our bicycle checkout procedures, ideally expanding with more checkout points around campus and covered outdoor bike racks.



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