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UCD student helps roll out bike-sharing program

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Last month, the City of Denver announced a new bicycle sharing program that will rent bicycles for a minimal fee for people to ride around the city. A University of Colorado Denver PhD student, **Andrew Duvall**, played an intricate role in the development of the program and the Mayor's effort to make the city greener.

Duvall first became involved in Denver's new bike sharing program in December 2007 when a group of individuals decided to introduce the program during the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver. The subcommittee partnered with multiple organizations including Humana Health, Bikes Belong, the Denver Police Department, Denver Public Works, and the Department of Parks and Recreation to establish new street markings and routes to enhance safety for cyclists.

In April 2008, Duvall was officially appointed to the Denver Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Committee and in July, he was invited by the mayor's office to participate in planning the legacy bicycle sharing system.

Duvall is part of the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program at UCD's downtown campus and was the only researcher to become involved with the bicycle sharing program working to develop and support plans of how to operate and administer bicycles within the system.

"During the four days of the DNC, I served as a station captain for the largest station in the system, managing and training a team of volunteers, and provided daily usage figures to the Mayor's public relations representative," Duvall said.

The bikes that will be used in the Mayor's pilot program announced this month are more advanced than those used during the DNC in August 2008. "The bicycles in the pilot and for the upcoming city system are purpose-built, 'smart' bicycles with integral components enabling them to connect to administrative system software through a docking interface at stations." The system is able to monitor usage and maintenance requirements, as well as individual information from time rented to calories burned. During the DNC, riders logged 5,552 individual rides, while burning over 824,000 calories. Riders also covered 26,582 miles-miles that might have produced 9.3 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions if traveled by car or taxi.

The current plan is that by this summer, the City of Denver will have 500 bicycles for public use at automated stations around the city. Duvall's involvement in the program revolves around research to "measure and determine the effects bicycle sharing systems have on a population, especially in regard to incidence and risk of obesity, carbon emissions and air quality, as well as changes in individual and group behavior," he said.

This past November, Duvall was named as vice chair of the Denver Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Committee. He now serves as chair for the Policy and Research Committee of the Denver Urban Bicycle Transportation System, investigating solutions to problems and answering questions as they arise. A goal of the program is to reduce carbon emissions in the City of Denver by approximately 147 metric tons in the initial months of operation.

"It is very exciting to be a part of this program building it from the ground up," said Duvall. "Currently, Paris has the largest bike sharing program in the world with more than 20,000 bikes. It would be phenomenal if Denver became the bike sharing icon of the United States."

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