


After delays, Portland bike-share program could get rolling this month

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By Emily Allen

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The first 50 bikes in a long-awaited bike-share program are expected to hit the streets of downtown Portland on Aug. 15, according to the Michigan company in charge of bringing them here.

By Sept. 1, Tandem Mobility – which is involved with more than 20 bike-share programs across the country – says it expects to have 200 bikes available throughout the city, including 50 electric-assisted models.

The City of Portland selected Tandem Mobility last August to launch a bike-share program by this summer.

But the company delayed its initial June launch date in favor of a partial rollout in July, saying it needed more time to raise another \$50,000 from sponsors.

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As of the end of July, in peak tourist season, no ride-share bikes had been installed.

Tandem Mobility CEO Keli Hoyt-Rupert said the long wait is mostly because a project like this has many moving parts.

“The operational deliverables needed for all those entities is just a lot to pull together,” Hoyt-Rupert said. “I don’t think it’s unusual that there’s been a delay from the initial launch dates.”

Tandem is still looking for local organizations to sponsor docking stations at \$7,500 apiece, Hoyt-Rupert said. But with a \$150,000 pledge from the Maine Department of Transportation and another \$100,000 from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, the



A Tandem Mobility bike rental station at California State Polytechnic University Humboldt in Arcata, California. Tandem has been chosen to launch a similar service in Portland and is expected to hit the streets of on Aug. 15. *Photo courtesy of Tandem Mobility*

bike-share program has enough capital to move forward.

The City of Portland is not making any direct investment in the program, but has offered “in-kind” dollars by having city staff help locate appropriate docking sites and potential local donors.

The 200-bike network will require about \$350,000 in sponsorships annually, Tandem said Thursday. It will also be dependent on rider fees.

Riders will pay \$1 to unlock a pedal bike, and then \$0.15 for every minute on the bike. Electric-assisted models, which won't be immediately available, will cost \$1 to unlock and \$0.30 per minute.

Riders will be able to pay \$14.99 for a monthly membership, and an annual membership will be available starting next spring.

"We feel like this combination is the right mix that enables the local community to be involved, to support the program, and for us as an operator to be sustainable," Hoyt-Rupert said. "I think what the city doesn't want to have happen is for this program to disappear in three years."

All fees will be paid through a national, third-party app called Movatic that Tandem Mobility has partnered with in other states. All riders will have

to create accounts in the app to use the bikes,
but they will not be required to select ongoing
memberships.

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