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CITY COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

Switzerland's largest bike sharing scheme taking shape in Bern

Bern, 12 June 2017. The civic authorities in Bern and the company PubliBike AG have agreed on the next stages in the implementation of the Velo Bern bike hire scheme. The city council has approved the agreement and is sending the city parliament an application for a loan to finance the undertaking. The launch of what will be Switzerland's largest bike sharing system is planned for May 2018. The scheme ultimately envisages a fleet of 2,400 bikes available from around 200 stations.

"Establishing the bike sharing system represents another step in the direction of making Bern a 'cycling capital'," says upbeat city councillor Ursula Wyss.

"Together, the bike hire system, public transport and other sharing services will promote more flexible mobility and provide users with more options they can incorporate in their everyday mobility habits." In addition, the scheme will create meaningful work opportunities for the long-term unemployed and other groups, such as refugees. Working on behalf of PubliBike, the city of Bern's competence centre for work will ensure that the scheme operates smoothly. The existing "Bern rollt" bike scheme, which is largely aimed at tourists, will be integrated into the new Velo Bern programme.

Simple, customer-friendly access system

PubliBike, a wholly-owned PostBus subsidiary, will provide the city of Bern with a system for hiring excellent bicycles and a simple, user-friendly and app-based access system for regular and casual users alike. The network of some 200 stations will cover the entire city, and when the entire fleet is up and running, it will consist of around 2,400 bikes. Half of these will be e-bikes capable of reaching 25 km/h and fully powered by eco-electricity. There will be an attractive pricing system for users, and SwissPass holders will also be able to hire Velo

Bern bikes. Speaking to the media, PostBus Management Board member Roman Cueni said, “Our PubliBike subsidiary will cater to the last mile of a public transport journey, and its large share of e-bikes will make everyday mobility much easier for people who live in the city, commuters and tourists.”

As public space in Bern is at a premium, certain things will have to make way for the bike hire system, including 97 parking spaces (14 of them subject to charges) and some 300 bike locking points.

No operating costs for the city of Bern

The city of Bern will not be required to contribute to the cost of operating the bike sharing system. Similarly, PubliBike will bear all investment costs incurred by the installation of the stations, the bikes themselves and other similar expenses. The city is obliged only to provide PubliBike with the “ready-to-use” public space required for the bike stations. This means that the system will cost the city of Bern considerably less than was originally assumed. The sole outlay for the city is for issues such as planning permission fees, implementation support, communication and advertising.

City parliament must approve loan

Bern’s city council will apply for credit from the city parliament to cover the above-mentioned costs resulting from the implementation of the system. This funding will include a one-off investment loan of CHF 500,000 and a five-year guarantee credit of CHF 276,000 a year. In addition, there will be an annual income waiver of CHF 24,000 due to the loss of parking revenue.

Further information:

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Note to media representatives: The city parliament presentation, a factsheet and images can be downloaded from www.bern.ch/medienmitteilungen (also available in French, Italian and English at www.publibike.ch).

About the bikes

The scheme's bicycles are made with a uniform, lightweight aluminium frame suitable for cyclists with a height of 140 to 200 cm. The 20-inch wheels mean that the bikes are smaller and more manoeuvrable than conventional bicycles, while their puncture-proof tyres are 55 mm wide. They feature a continuously variable gear hub, hydraulic disc brakes and dynamo-powered LED lights. Half of the fleet is fitted with electric motors that can attain speeds of 25 km/h. Users are not required to wear helmets when riding this type of e-bike. The batteries are recharged with eco-electricity. In Bern, PubliBike bicycles will be anthracite in colour. The tender contains detailed information regarding advertising opportunities and branding on the bikes.

Hiring bikes

Access to the bike hire system will be managed by a smart lock on the bike or e-bike. Users will be required to register for the system on the PubliBike website or in its free app. They can then use the app to locate an available bike or e-bike and unlock it via the app or an RFID card such as the SwissPass. Users can begin and end a trip at their stations of choice.

Rates

	Subscription cost	Bike			E-bike		
		Up to 30 mins	Every min. afterwards	24 hrs	Up to 30 mins	Every min. afterwards	24 hrs
Without annual QuickBike subscription	-	3.00	0.15	20.00	4.50	0.23	40.00
Annual EasyBike subscription	50.00	0.00	0.12	20.00	3.50	0.18	40.00
Annual MaxiBike subscription	200.00	0.00	0.06	20.00	1.80	0.09	40.00

Bike stations

The scheme will be expanded gradually. Stage one is planned for launch in May 2018 and will comprise some 100 stations throughout Bern and 1,200 bicycles.

Users will be able to park the bikes like conventional bicycles, i.e. the system will not use docking stations, and there will be no equipment for charging e-bikes. Instead, PubliBike will run a centralised facility for charging batteries, which will be swapped on-site when the system reports a bike with a low battery level. The operating system's communication technology will be integrated into the facilities at the station (column, board or screen), which will also display customer information. The specific facilities will depend on the conditions at each station. At around 80 percent of stations, columns will be used.