

Chinese bike-sharing startup aims at US with new model

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Rapidly growing bike-sharing startup Mobike already has 100 million users in China. And it's now looking to the US and Europe in the hope its unique "dockless" system can disrupt the industry.

Mobike this week brought a handful of the brightly-colored two-wheelers to showcase at the Fortune Brainstorm Tech conference in Aspen, Colorado.

While many major US cities already have bike-sharing programs, Mobike co-founder and chief executive Davis Wang said he wants municipalities to take a look at his company's new concept.

"If you look at (traditional) station bikes, it's like a desktop PC," he said. "We are more a smartphone. You just use it."

Wang told the conference that the startup which launched in April 2016 decided that "the dock and the station had to be eliminated so people can use (the bikes) more easily."

With no bike stations or docks, travelers aren't restricted in their trips. Users unlock the bikes with a [smartphone app](#).

The custom-designed, aluminum-frame Mobike bicycles have a drive shaft instead of a chain, disc brakes and tubeless tires which make them virtually maintenance-free. They have built in GPS, and riders recharge the battery.

In 15 months, the company has expanded to over 150 cities, and has put some six million of its connected bikes on the road, claiming to be the world's largest bike-sharing company.

"We are transporting more than 20 million people a day," he said, making the bicycle more important than the taxi in some Chinese cities, offering rides at the equivalent of 50 US cents.

'Want to be global'

Mobike last month announced it had raised \$600 million led by Chinese tech giant Tencent, the largest ever for a bike-sharing firm, giving it a reported valuation of over \$1 billion.

It launched last month in two British cities including Manchester and is also in Singapore and Japan.

"We want to be global," Wang told AFP at the conference.

The company hopes to be in 200 cities worldwide by the end of the year, with its eyes on the US and Europe.

Wang, who formerly worked at Uber, said Mobike model can coexist with the current bike programs, and get more people interested in bicycling.

In the US, "we are studying local markets, we are in talks with local governments."

In China, Mobike is locked in battle with rivals including Ofo, which is backed by the Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing.

Mobike faces some challenges with its business model, including getting

people to handle the bikes responsibly and get them to needed locations.

It has responded with incentives that give bonus points to riders who find abandoned or damaged bikes or who bring them to needed locations.

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