

Paris city bikes go electric

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Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo (L), who is on an crusade to clean up the city's air, aims to lure more Parisians into the saddle

Ten years after Paris launched the wildly popular Velib bicycle-sharing scheme, the grey two-wheelers that have spawned imitators worldwide are getting a makeover.

On Wednesday, the City of Paris unveiled two new, colourful models

that will replace the existing, 20,000-strong Velib fleet from January, 30 percent of which will be electric.

The frames of the bicycles are still grey but the manual model comes with an apple-green basket and chainguard. On the electric versions, which have a maximum speed of 25 km/hour and a range of 50 kilometres (30 miles), those parts are turquoise blue.

By including [electric bicycles](#) in the scheme Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who is on an crusade to clean up the city's air, aims to lure more Parisians into the saddle.

On Wednesday, she took a spin on one and declared it "lighter, more agreeable and more useful in making the [bicycle](#) a mode of transport that is used much more widely than today".

The new system is also designed to alleviate chronic shortages of Velib parking spots by allowing bicycles to be parked in tops-and-tails fashion when stations are full.

The tender to operate it won by Franco-Spanish consortium Smovengo, which beat out the existing French operator JCDecaux.

The changes come as a raft of Chinese-inspired privately-owned, bike-sharing schemes begin popping up around Paris. They differ from Velib in that cyclists can park their wheels anywhere.

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