20 Good Reasons
— to ride a cargo bike
20 Good Reasons to Ride a Cargo Bike

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City Changer Cargo Bike (CCCB) builds on the limitless potential of cargo bikes, promoting their usage among public, private, and commercial users. Through support of the Horizon2020 programme, CCCB brings together a team of 20 partners from Norway to Greece, the United Kingdom to Bulgaria. Learning from best practice across Europe, CCCB will raise awareness and support the uptake of cargo bikes and cargo bike initiatives.

In doing so we will foster exciting developments that, among other things, offer more sustainable logistics operations, improve public spaces, engage citizens, and reduce traffic congestion. The initiative will also work to get cargo bikes in European cities by developing new financing schemes and providing opportunities to test cargo bikes.
What is a Cargo Bike?

Cargo bikes are bicycles that have been specifically designed to carry cargo, be it heavy or light, big or small. Cargo bikes take many forms, ranging from the traditional short john, to the three-wheel cargo-trike models, to custom built four-wheel frames with electric pedal assist motors for specific commercial needs. And while cargo bikes have been in use for more than a century, recent design and battery innovations have made contemporary models much more efficient and accessible.

Load capacity and prices of these bikes very greatly as well, with lighter bikes priced at €1000–€2000 managing a load up to 80 kg while heavier bikes ranging anywhere from €2000–€12,000 being capable of moving up to 350 kg. These bikes have the potential to tackle the environmental, logistics, traffic and social issues facing many European cities, all while providing a new perception of mobility, transport and quality of life.
Environmentally Friendly

A tool to tackle carbon emissions and pollution, land use, and energy waste.

Noise and pollution from commercial traffic are a distinctly urban problem, as cities produce 40% of all transportation related carbon emissions and 70% of all other transportation related pollutants.\textsuperscript{1} A single cargo bike replacing a diesel transporter can save 5 tons of carbon emissions per year, making them an effective tool for achieving the EU goal of CO\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{-free city logistics by 2030.}\textsuperscript{2} Not only are cargo bikes green to use, they only take 5% of the materials and energy of a car to make. Land is also a scarce resource in urban areas and in cities like Berlin, where about 28 km (2013 stats)\textsuperscript{3} is dedicated parking zones, converting just 2% of this space could create parking space for over 300,000 bicycles.
Changing lifestyles is not just possible, it’s the cheapest and easiest option.

The price of a basic cargo bike can be as low as 1,000–2,000 euros, with heavy-duty and motorized bikes costing upwards of €10,000. The vehicle itself has low operational and maintenance costs with minimal insurance and tax. Moreover, the mechanical simplicity of a bike allows you to make your own repairs, in many cases, without the assistance of a bike shop. In Europe, the cumulative transportation cost of a family can reach an average of 13% of the household income. Copenhagen is a great example for how these costs can be greatly reduced, with 26% of all families with 2 or more children owning a cargo bike, and 30% of cargo bikes acting as substitutes for a car.
If cycling is already good, cargo bikes will only further the goal of healthy cities.

A cycling population makes for healthier individuals and a better functioning city. The life expectancy of people who regularly cycle increases by up to 14 months and commuting by bike exposes you to half the pollution as sitting inside a car. In Copenhagen, where the amount traveled by bike increased by 60 million km from 2012 to 2016, residents took 50,000 less sick days overall and saved the national healthcare system 215 million euros. While cycling to work is a great way to commute and stay active, riding a cargo bike is even better! In many cases, cargo bikes eliminate the need for daily travel by car altogether.
Overcrowded cities are redefining human spaces and sustaining the growing e-commerce industry won’t be possible for much longer without substantial change.

Urbanization is accelerating, cities are overcrowded, and logistic processes are getting harder to sustain. As a result, each year the European economy loses 1% of its GDP due to traffic congestion. While Limited Traffic Zones (LTZ) are catching on, closing tens of European urban centers to motorized traffic, e-commerce is continuing to grow at a rate of 10% every year. Cargo bikes are an effective solution for this sort of last mile urban freight transport. These bikes have the potential to tackle the environmental, logistics, and traffic issues facing many European cities, all while providing a new perception of mobility, transport and quality of life for residents.
Improving Accessibility in Transportation

Cargo bikes break down the mobility barriers that prevent freedom of movement for all.

Transportation is not simply about getting from point A to point B — it’s about access to jobs, marketplaces, social services, educational opportunities, and more in both urban and rural communities. As the cheapest form of non-walking transport, the cargo bike eliminates mobility barriers and makes transportation accessible to almost everyone, all while requiring no drivers license. They also make it possible for the young and elderly to enjoy similar access to the city through programs like Cycling Without Age, whose mission is to build inclusive communities where a person’s age, background, or ability to move do not hinder their participation in social life.
Promote Gender Equality

Cargo bike trends shows an important shift away from a male dominated cycling culture.

The use of cargo bikes by women, particularly with children, is significant: they represent a minority of cyclists overall, but a majority of cargo bike users with children.\(^\text{10}\) 78% of women use their cargo bikes to transport children as opposed to just 56% of men. Promoting cargo bike use will mediate a pervasive gender divide in the bicycle community, especially because female riders’ commutes tend to include more stops such as schools, grocery stores, and other errands.\(^\text{11}\) In the Netherlands, for instance, where this has been successfully implemented, women make up the majority of cyclists.\(^\text{12}\) This suggests that widespread education and normalization around cargo bikes, in conjunction with more bike lanes, will benefit women and enable them to complete their daily trips by bike.
Improve Family Mobility

*The easiest, smartest and most fun minivan imaginable.*

Car owners are facing increasing taxes, emissions fines, and automobile bans. Cargo bikes offer a safe and more convenient form of transportation for families and their children. Pick-up and drop-off for school children can be safe and easy without masses of cars competing on the roads and endangering children while doing so. With the ability to carry up to four young children at four times less space than a car, cargo bikes are abundantly useful and efficient. Using a fraction of the parking space needed for a car, cargo bikes are a cheaper and safe alternative to daily car trips for families.
Frees up Time

Ditching a car will save you about a working week’s worth of time every year. What will you do with all your new free time?

All around the world, every major city has seen that cyclists are just as fast as or even faster than cars. Cyclists are less susceptible to traffic and can generally travel at faster speeds during rush hours. During peak hours the average speed of a car varies from 5 to 15 km/h, while a bike can easily reach over 15 km/h without much effort. In London, searching for a parking space can take up to eight minutes, adding up to about four days a year worth of time spent parking!
Contribute to Vibrant Street Life

Replacing a car with a cargo bike makes space for life sized cities.

Cargo bikes can contribute to fostering dynamic street life and transforming the experience of pedestrians and cyclists. Liveability is comprised of various factors such as urban design, land use, and transportation systems that stress human dimensions. The compact versatility of cargo bikes allow for any number of uses besides transport such as art installations, impromptu DJ booths, and food bikes. These opportunities to enjoy interactions and activities on the street will improve quality of life.
Safer Streets

Cargo bikes can reduce the number of cars on the street, saving and improving lives.

As has been seen all across Europe, the number of traffic deaths decreases as the percentage of journeys completed by bike goes up. It is no coincidence that the country with the highest bicycle usage, the Netherlands, also has the lowest number of cyclist fatalities (1.1 fatalities per 100 millions km cycled). A recent report by Barcelona Institute for Global Health has predicted that a build up of bicycle infrastructure could cause a 10,000 annual drop in premature deaths across all European cities. Transforming streets to accommodate a quarter of citizens on bicycles lanes will save lives not only by reducing traffic related accidents, but also the harmful effects of environmental pollutants and sedentary lifestyles.
Facilitates Intermodality

With the ability to switch from street to train, there are no limits to where you can go with your cargo bike.

Cyclists using cargo bikes can benefit from the versatility of bike-train connections. Cities all over Europe have facilitated intermodality by installing secure cargo bike parking at transportation hubs. Malmo, Maastricht, Cambridge, and Utrecht are among those cities who have inaugurated cargo bike parking at train stations. The cargo bike’s intermodality, it’s ability to easily navigate between street, cycle lane, and train, is another way it trumps cars in terms of convenience and speed.
Versatile Business Platform

A customizable cargo bike allows you to start or reinvent your business with little investment.

From coffee and ice cream to flower delivery, more and more micro-business start-ups are using cargo bikes as a flexible worldwide business model. Due to the low starting capital required and the wide range of possibilities, creative minds can easily turn their ideas into reality. Organizers of street festivals and events benefit from this and the economy profits from an increasing number of small entrepreneurs in the area. A new business field will be opened, emission-free and without noise.
Employee Reliability

Cycling will benefit employees who cover long distances on a daily basis and ensures timely operations.

Replacing lorries with cargo bikes raises the potential of the entire logistic sector of a company and increases both the operational and health conditions of its employees. When Copenhagen’s Hospitals transitioned their blood sample operations to cargo bike, logistics costs decreased, number of daily trips increased, and the number of sick days of their employees were reduced. Without sacrificing the coverage area of their services, the hospital was able to improve employee health and performance. According to UNECE, doubling cycling rates across Europe would add 7 billion euros to the economy due to reduced employee absences.17
Corporate Responsibility

*Businesses looking to reduce their carbon footprint can take the next step with cargo bikes.*

All the environmental impacts of commercial production are measurable. It’s possible to calculate everything from the carbon footprint, GHG emissions, to the land use of an organization. The social and environmental impacts of a company must be a consideration of any business model. The use of cargo bikes can play an important role in changing the perception of the “ethic fiber” of a corporation. It’s a little step businesses can take to redefine their commitment towards a sustainable transition.
Green Communication

Companies are looking for solutions to show their attention to environmental issues and cargo bikes register a considerable success in this respect.

Attention to environmental sustainability can be profitable. European consumers are becoming increasingly critical and discriminating in their consumption. One of the most visible elements of a company’s supply chain is the transport process and most cargo bikes are big enough to display advertisements, logos, and messages that companies can use for marketing purposes. The successful use of cargo bikes by many of the world’s largest express carriers in the last mile logistics process shows a commitment to carry on the sustainable transition and (metaphorically) turn the characteristic yellow facade of DHL green.
Cost-Savings

Profitable and cost-effective means of transport to carry your business parcels.

E-cargo bikes offer an economical alternative to traditional fleet vehicles. Costing a fraction of buying a new car, with hardly any fuel costs, low insurance costs, lower maintenance and repair costs, an e-cargo bike could save a business in fleet costs. Other important advantages will include less space needed for parking, fewer sick employees, and less time navigating congested streets and traffic jams. In one case, Drings of Greenwich, a Greenwich butcher, was able to complete 95% of deliveries under 5 km by e-cargo bike, saving more than £830 in just fuel costs a year. While the majority of a vehicle’s weight is its own and only a small part of the weight is related to the load it carries, the cargo bike is weight-efficient and can carry 4-6 times the payload per kg of vehicle weight compared to vans.
Logistics Efficiency

For logistics companies that need their fleets to be timely and efficient, cargo bikes are the best solution to tackle the oncoming last mile crisis.

Every kind of freight transport, from a bag of groceries to a fridge, going a distance or 7 km or less and weighing under 200 kg/m³ could be done by bike according to Cyclelogistics. Cargo bikes could substitute over half of logistics and quarter of commercial deliveries in European cities. In Central London, last mile logistics are characterized by short driving distances with predominantly stationary vehicles that spend more time parking than driving. Cargo bikes, on the other hand, have the advantage of maneuvering through vehicle, pedestrian, and cycle zones, allowing for faster delivery times than motorized vehicles in cities, despite their potential to reach much higher speeds.
Public Health Savings

The many health benefits of increased cycling can save regions millions in healthcare costs.

For every kilometer traveled, the social cost of commuting by car is over six times greater than getting around by bike. There are also real economic advantages from the health benefits of a cycling population. Reducing mortality and morbidity by doubling the cycling rate would contribute an additional 189 billion euros to the European economy. Sadly, in EU countries where private and motorized vehicles are the primary means of transportation, road accidents are the main causes of youth mortality (15–24 year).
More Affordable Infrastructure

Promoting cargo bikes and cycle lanes is the best investment cities can make in their infrastructure.

Cities can bolster their municipal budgets by promoting cargo bikes and investing in cycling infrastructure. Building cycling infrastructure consistently yields higher returns and benefit-cost ratios than major road and public transportation projects while costing a fraction of the price. Investments in the London Cycle Network produced a 4:1 return and Helsinki saw even twice that with 8 euros of benefits for every euro spent! With driving becoming increasingly expensive and cycling increasingly cheap, cities can stay ahead of the curve by investing in cycling.
Lead the Urban Mobility Transition

According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, cities need to take concrete actions to face the environmental issues of our era.

Cities can transition towards a carbon neutral future by revolutionizing the execution of public services and procurement policies. Daily trips made inside city centers can be made faster and smarter if conducted by cargo bike. This has been successfully modeled by the use of cargo bikes to shuttle blood samples between hospital in Copenhagen, causing an increase in daily trips completed, cheaper fleets, and less sick days among employees. Using recycled plastic material, the Dutch city of Zwolle installed a durable bicycle lane that is more sustainable than asphalt. Municipalities can lead their citizens by example by completing daily public services on cargo bike and providing preferential treatment to vendors offering low emissions fleets through procurement practices.
Sources

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