



# PROJECT SUMMARY

Lake Charles and McNeese State University



**BAYOU  
BIKESHARE  
PLAN**

**Feasibility Study and Implementation**

Bantam Strategy Group and Toole Design Group

APRIL 2019

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan was directed by a steering committee involving representation from the City of Lake Charles (Lake Charles), City of Sulphur (Sulphur) McNeese State University, Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, Calcasieu Parish, Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Centre (SWLAHEC), Hardtner family, Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development Commission (IMCAL), Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, Phillips 66, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana. The steering committee met six times over the course of the study thus becoming the local supervisory body ensuring the voice of the community was reflected and ensuring the project will progress as planned to completion. The participation of the taskforce members is not a reflection of individual endorsements of this project.

This study evaluates the readiness of implementing a bikeshare program in the two cities and university identified in this study, and the probability of success the system could have with usage and financial sustainability. Several sections of this study explore bikeshare equipment and technology, business models, funding options, and final bikeshare recommendations. A series of public and individual meetings were conducted to understand the local impact, opportunities, and challenges the bikeshare system would have in Southwest Louisiana.

Using a data driven approach and best practices from other jurisdictions, the team developed a proposed system service area and phasing plan for the bikeshare program. This process began with a high-level community analysis to explore the physical conditions, population and demographic trends, land use and economic development trends, and the transportation environment to identify potential opportunities and challenges for the bikeshare program.

One of the most substantial goals for this bikeshare program was to determine a suitable funding structure; therefore, a high-level evaluation of different business models was conducted to discover what could be achievable for both communities and the university. This plan summarizes the different ownership structures, operating models, funding mechanisms, and more recommendations. Additionally, the team considered the community and political will associated with implementing a bikeshare system.

**The City of Lake Charles and McNeese State University are feasible locations for a bikeshare system. The recommendation for the City of Sulphur is to consider a bicycle library and focus on a community bicycle and pedestrian plan initially.** This document fully outlines the results from the analysis, outreach, and full scope of work conducted from mid-July 2018 to end of February 2019 for Bayou Bikeshare.

# RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

This section was designed so all recommendations for the bikeshare program can be reviewed with ease and at a glance. A complete explanation, analysis, and the methodologies used to draw on these recommendations can be found in the full *Bayou Bikeshare Feasibility and Implementation Plan* document.

## 1. Equipment and Technology Recommendation

For this bikeshare program, we propose 151 smart bicycles with roughly 32 hub locations for the initial system launch with an expansion of 39 additional hubs and 184 bicycles in a future phase. This would put the total system at 334 bicycles and 74 smaller hubs once the system is fully launched. The fleet of smart bikes can leverage bikeshare specific racks or designated hubs. If amenable in some instances existing bike racks or areas can be geofenced to allow for system flexibility.

This recommendation removes the need for larger dock-based stations and kiosks while still providing a functional and easy-to-use program. Though it is still recommended that we will install and identify designated hubs as bikeshare specific, using signage and geofencing technology can curate a positive user experience. The community overwhelmingly supported the idea of a smart bike bikeshare program over a dockless system, most consistently asserting the bikeshare hubs would be more organized in appearance and consistence in location for usage.

## 2. Final Operational Recommendation

By selecting experienced bikeshare professionals and durable equipment, the cities and other stakeholders will be entering into a strong partnership with committed people engrained in the national bikeshare industry but who are willing to invest in local bikeshare staff and partnerships to ensure a safe, clean, accessible transportation system is showcased throughout the City and University. A qualified bikeshare provider will hire and react locally but can leverage the economies of scale and bring the benefits of national resources. A vendor should employ best practices and utilize proven strategies from various markets to ensure this system is a success moving forward. By utilizing this strategy, the goal of financial dependence from the local government budgets is met without forfeiting long-term program sustainability.

## 3. Funding Recommendation

It is recommended the funding sources utilized for the Bayou Bikeshare program is comprised of user fees and sponsorship/advertising partnerships. Throughout the community engagement efforts, the overwhelming majority expressed an aversion to utilizing government funds for the capital and installation costs associated with implementing a bikeshare system. It was also observed the political will for securing a local match associated with accessing state or federal funds for this project would not pass. Therefore, it is recommended that no government funds will be utilized for this phase of the bikeshare system.

The use of corporate sponsorship and advertising funds to fill the total system shortfall is critical for the bikeshare system. To cover the \$623,412 funding gap calculated for the capital and operational costs over a 5-year period and spread among the fleet with the expansion would equate to roughly \$373 per bike per year (a total of \$124,916 a year). However, if this was broken into two sponsorships asks to align with the phases, the sponsorship ask for Year 1 and Year 2 would be roughly \$1,654 per bike per year with Years 3 to Year 5 being \$199 per bike per year since the proforma does anticipate the system to start seeing a farebox recovery until later years.

It is the recommendation of this study to raise funds for a total of \$124,916 annually for a 5-year term for simplicity and understanding of sponsorship needs as opposed to aligning it directly with the phasing. The annual request could be presented to an overall system sponsor, which would provide the company with exclusivity and maximum brand recognition. Another option could be dividing the sponsorship by 2 to 4 companies so brand opportunities would be shared, and the annual sponsorship ask would be lower for each company (i.e. 3 companies sponsor bikeshare and each pay \$41,639 annually for 5 years).

#### **4. Implementation Recommendation**

It is recommended the Bayou Bikeshare system strongly consider the Privately Owned and Operated Model. This model will allow the bikeshare system to thrive without the need for government funding but it can still attract corporate sponsorships. This also positions the system with high-quality bikeshare equipment and technology that is solely focused on pushing community-driven strategies. This model also ensures an experienced bikeshare operator is tending to the daily demands of the system which will increase efficiency and effectiveness of the user experience. This model illuminates the concerns associated with the City or University carrying the financial or liability burden of a bikeshare system, yet still creates accountability of the operator.

It is recommended that Lake Charles and McNeese coordinate a process together for selecting single bikeshare vendor. This process could involve interviewing a vendor and proceeding with a cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) with the desired vendor at no cost directly to the City or University. A CEA is the process that ULL and the Lafayette Consolidated Government proceeded with in early 2019 in order to resurrect a community-wide bikeshare program because the Geaux Velo bikeshare system that solely served the campus was operationally troubled. This streamlined path forward could yield bikeshare becoming available to both Lake Charles and McNeese later this year pending corporate sponsorships dollars being secured.

# BIKESHARE SERVICE AREA

