

A Bicycle-Friendly Campus: The Case of Mahidol University in Thailand

Thailand

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Background Information

In 2008 the Mahidol University in Salaya, located in the Nakhonpathom province of Thailand, launched a new campaign convincing students, teachers and people living or working nearby the university to ride bicycles as opposed to driving cars. The campaign is called “The way of bicycles, the way of Mahidol”, and has contributed significantly to bicycle usage not only through campaigning, but also by improving the basic infrastructure in order to enable this shift. The University opened a bicycle centre run by volunteers, called Jugga (short for juggayan which, in Thai language, means bicycle), with the purpose of building up the cycling culture. The ultimate aim of Mahidol’s bicycle campaign is to be make Mahidol a Bicycle-Friendly Campus which could serve as an example for the rest of Thailand.

Policy Details

Mahidol University, one of the most famous universities in Thailand, first introduced the idea by changing the physical structure of the university, which was inspired by the notion of a ‘Green Campus’.

Quick facts

Zone	Mahidol University
Time Frame	2011 - Present
Topic	Reducing emissions, and fossil fuel consumption, eco-friendly atmosphere
Implementing Agency	Mahidol University

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Consequently, five concepts were developed:

1. Provide the right knowledge needed for safe cycling
2. Increase basic infrastructure and facilities to support cyclists
3. Incentivize people to take part in the campaign
4. Coordinate with partners and networks
5. Create and mobilize new plans systematically.

The campaign “the way of bicycle, the way of Mahidol” was introduced to the university in 2011 in order to encourage people to reduce emissions from car engines and make a gradual shift to using bicycles. The first step was establishing specific areas as green zones with a 50% reduction of cars, while at the same time increasing footpaths and bicycle paths. Furthermore, the University extended the cycling route from 2.5 kilometers to 5 kilometers all over the campus. The entire campaign is supported by the “Jugga center”, which is used for bicycle repair and trading as well as for providing knowledge on cycling, including teaching people how to maintain bikes. In addition, volunteers working at the center also draw up a bicycle map allowing people to plan the best routes for their car-less journey.

The campaign reflects the initiative and willingness of people to reduce emissions which, in turn, will make them healthier by cycling as an exercise. Hence, this is a win-win solution for reducing fossil-fuel consumption and saving energy, while tackling environmental and health issues. However, running the campaign is rather challenging due to the fact that Thailand is primarily a tropical country. The majority of the Thai people avoid cycling during the day due to high temperatures. Consequently, people are likely to cycle only in the mornings and during the evenings. Nevertheless, the combined effect of all the initiatives put in place by the Mahidol University has brought about an improvement in the lives of many people on campus by creating and facilitating an eco-friendly atmosphere where the local population, students and teachers are one with nature.

References

The following documents informed the development of this paper:

Mahidol University Department of Physical Systems and Environment, Bicycles: ‘The Key to Mahidol Lifestyle’. Available from: http://www.op.mahidol.ac.th/oppe/green/css/img_download/Key%20to%20Mahidol%20Lifestyle.pdf (accessed 8 February 2013).