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The Innovative Cyclist

April 17, 2014 - *by* Justin JB Braun

How a Rollins alumnus transformed an undergraduate research paper into a city-wide movement.



Peter Martinez '13, director of Orlando Bike Share Program, rides one of his rental bikes through the streets of Winter Park. (Photo by Justin Braun)

Peter Martinez '13, director of [Orlando Bike Share Program](#), was looking for a topic to write a paper for his *Organizational*

Dysfunction class during a spring break trip in Washington, D.C., when he first encountered “bike share” in action. Then the idea struck—bike share programs result because of the systemic failure of automotive-centric transportation. And, as an Orlando resident, he knew the great potential for this concept in his home town.

“We see that [systemic failure of transportation] apparent on State Roads 50 and 436,” Martinez says. “They’re dangerous by design. The streets are designed for cars and not people.”

Martinez began asking everyone involved with transportation initiatives in Central Florida if a bike share program was in the works and discovered no one was doing it.



From right to left: Peter Martinez '13, Rob Soviero '13, and Peter Fasano '14 (Photo by Justin Braun)



(Photo by Justin Braun)

“MetroPlan Orlando was talking about it but there was no action,” he says. “I ended up being the squeaky wheel who helped get Orlando leadership to act.”

MetroPlan Orlando, the metropolitan planning organization for Orange, Osceola, and Seminole

counties, held monthly working meetings during which community members could actively participate in the planning processes. Martinez, and his friend and associate Robert

Soviero '13, were the only community members present and helped research, survey, and move the conversation forward.

Martinez and Soviero teamed up to form what is now known as



(Photo by Justin Braun)

Orlando Bike Share Program and entered the 2013 Crummer Graduate School of Business' Venture Plan Competition where they took home the prize of Best Green Technology Plan.

In June of last year, the City of Orlando issued a request for proposal for a bike share initiative. By August, Martinez partnered with CycleHop—a professional service organization focused on planning, launching, and operating world-class bike share programs, including one in Tampa Bay—and submitted their proposal to the city. By October, they were chosen as the top vendor.

Since then, Martinez secured office space downtown close to city hall, added to his team Peter Fasano '14 who acts as the organization's business development intern/coordinator, and finalized his contract with the city, which was signed in March.

Martinez says he was chosen because “no other companies would be as involved in the process as we are. We live here.” He also understood what would be needed to implement the initiative in an efficient and scalable manner.

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“We didn't want the same style of system as is in place in Ft. Lauderdale,” Martinez says. “We decided to go with ‘smart bikes’ rather than ‘smart stations,’ which are bulky and require a lot of expensive infrastructure. Our ‘smart bikes’ can be rented using a mobile app or on the bike itself. It's cheaper for everyone that way.”

Martinez believes the savings will be passed along to the community in the form of bike-friendly infrastructure investments, tax deductions from participating in the bike share program, and bike-to-work programs through company partnerships

“This whole program is free from taxpayer money,” he says.

Martinez’s “smart bikes” have advanced features like radio-frequency identification (RFID) scanners, so members can use their card to rent and unlock bikes. Each bike will track miles traveled and calories burned as well as location information and carbon offset. Each bike share member will have an online profile where this info can be accessed.

“It’s more than a smart bike, it’s a smart commuting option,” says Soviero, who explained that the average Orlando household spends \$9,000 a year on automobile transportation. More than simply smart for a rider’s budget, he says, “Once you get on a bike, you see the city in a different light. We call it a stop and smell the roses opportunity.”

“Our goal is to make the city safer for bikes,”

Martinez says. “We will be sharing all of our GPS tracking data with urban planners who will use it to influence the planning of bike lanes and infrastructure developments. We want to ride bikes in Orlando without feeling intimidated. That’s why we started.”

Orlando Bike Share Program plans to have bikes in locations throughout the SunRail corridor by the end of November 2014. In the meantime, the team is building relationships, partnerships, and

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sponsorships with city planners, property owners, and local and national businesses.

Learn more about Orlando Bike Share Program at suncycles.org.



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