

Bicycles in Beijing

1. The special and different from the others

The topic I select today is bicycles in Beijing. First, let's look at some pictures taken in the streets of Beijing.



The following pictures are taken in my undergraduate college, Tsinghua University, during the class hours.



These pictures may give you an obvious idea of the large number of bicycles in Beijing.

Beijing has a name called “the city on the bike”. And in the 1970s, the bicycle is one of three key properties in China. The other two are watch, and sewing machine, which is used to make dress by yourself.



The following two numbers may visually tell you the incredible large number of bikes in Beijing:
0.2 million – the number of stolen bike per year; 2.4 million - The number on the road everyday.

The first one is the average number of stolen bicycles each year in Beijing. And the second is the number of bikes on the urban road everyday! Up to now, my family members have totally lost 8 bikes. One of my friends has lost 14 bikes during his undergraduate period! Though it's related with some social security factors, it still tells you what a huge number of bicycles it is in Beijing.

As a metropolis with a population of 20 million, and more than 10 million bicycles, Beijing is rather different from any other cities. And the bicycle does play a significant role in city transportation in Beijing.

2. The key features of my selection

Now let's figure out together the key features of bicycle:

First, as we all know that riding a bike could save gas or other energies and reduce the gas pollution towards the environment. The gas consumed by a sedan is 10 liters per hundred kilometers. And the automobile exhaust gas is 40 milligrams per kilometer. Second, it's good for your health. Riding a

bicycle for 20 minutes every day can reduce 90 kilocalories. Third, it takes fewer parking area than motor vehicles. In a big city with high densities of people and vehicles, riding a bicycle could partly solve the parking jam problem and save more public areas.

On the other hand, bicycles also bring us troubles. First, it's not as safe as other vehicles. It's easier to be destroyed in a crash and the rider often get serious injured in a traffic accident, even though the rider had been wearing the safety helmet. Second, the average speed of a common bicycle in the urban is about 15 kilometers per hour. It's much slower than sedans, motorcycles and other vehicles. That means, assuming your company is 30 kilometers far away from your home, it'll take you nearly 2 hours by bike every morning and afternoon, going to work and back. But if you drive, it'll only take you 30 minutes. So commonly, as a traffic tool, bicycles are only used by people whose home is not quite far from the company, and the ones who love exercises. The third disadvantage of riding bicycles is the influence of weather. It's quite a hard job to ride a bicycle in a windy, rainy, or snowy day. And it's dangerous, too. The last one, similarly, the landform of the urban also limit the bicycle to become a common traffic tool. In hilly cities, such as San Francisco or Sydney, riding bicycles is quite like taking part in the Tour of France climbing part.

3. Effective or ineffective?

After all the analysis above about bicycles, advantages and disadvantages, now let me put the two wheels transport tool into Beijing's transportation system and dip into the key features of Beijing.



First, it's very big. It takes a whole area of 16808 square kilometers and the urban area is 735 square kilometers. One of my friends lives in the northwest of the city, and her company locates east. She spends more than an hour driving to work everyday, and in rush hours, longer. It's an impossible job to ride to work.

Second, the big city now falls into a terrible traffic jam problem. During the rush hours, these main roads are all trapped like parking area! The average speed is less than 10 kilometers per hour. On the other hand, it's also too dangerous to ride bicycles in the vehicles mess.

The third special feature is the large temporary living population in Beijing. The floating population in Beijing is more than 5 million. Huge number, isn't it? The particular situation causes many serious problems. One is the social security problem, such as the big number of stolen bikes in the urban. Another one is paying the tax, as I mentioned here, it's rather difficult to ask the temporary living people to pay the tax of buying and using bicycles every year. It's also a hard job to standardize all the bicycle exchanging markets. The illegal markets and behaviors will ever cause more stealing cases. It forms an illegal circle, which makes the situation worse and worse.



References:

1. CCTV Legal Channel
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/>