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Electric cargo bikes now available for use, free of charge, at EPFL



Cargo bikes are available free of charge for up to 48 hours. ©Alain Herzog/EPFL

22.06.17 - Starting today, three electric cargo bikes will be available for use on campus to transport heavy or bulky objects.

Got a model to transport across campus? Or maybe you need to get three computers from one building to the next? Or do you just have a lot of shopping to do? Look no further. Three cargo bikes – a greener alternative to cars and much more practical than hand trolleys – are now available on campus. It's a free, self-service system: users book and unlock the bikes via a smartphone app.

"The advantages of cargo bikes are widely known. They're more environmentally friendly, more flexible, easier on the wallet and practical for users," says Luca Fontana, head of mobility for EPFL's Sustainable Campus initiative. "We're leading the way in Switzerland since we're the first ones to offer free of charge cargo bikes sharing, thanks to our partnership with Danish startup Donkey Republic. The locks are controlled via an app and a Bluetooth connection, so there's no need to pick up a key."

The three electric cargo bikes each have their own station: on Avenue Piccard, in the Esplanade underground car park and opposite building BC. After use, the bikes must be returned to their station and plugged in to recharge. The battery can run for 30 to 40 kilometers, and the bike can reach a maximum speed of 25kmph. All users have to do is register on the Donkey Republic platform. They can then check availability, find the nearest bike and book it for up to 48 hours.

The bikes are designed to carry a payload of up to 100 kilos. "This two-wheeled model is very easy to handle, although it takes a couple of minutes to get used to riding it," explains Fontana. "And the little motor really helps when carrying heavy loads." The bikes come equipped with a Trakyv anti-theft chip and can even be used off campus if need be.

The aim of this Sustainable Campus initiative is to meet the regular demand from associations, students and staff who have to lug equipment across campus every day. The project is now in a two-year pilot phase, and an initial assessment will be conducted at the end of this year.

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Source: Mediacom

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