Project Sensibel

Getting to the heart of the biking experience
What we're capturing:
Journeys, experiences and stories that track where, how and why bikers move.

To provide live data for:
Businesses and council staff who benefit from knowing how people move and spend in the city.
Cycling is our least-understood and potentially most transformational mode of movement in cities. Planning decisions are currently based on research undertaken at a specific time of year, or in review of a new piece of infrastructure. There’s currently no in depth understanding of the human experience of cycling or access to an ever evolving pool of user stories.
The Challenge

To create a participatory platform that enables citizens to share their biking stories to positively promote cycling and help shape our cycling infrastructure
The Concept

A Smart Bike Bell

To create a bike friendly device in the form of a bell. Riders sound one ring for a negative experience and two for a positive experience. Experiences, captured on the journey via a mobile phone, are sent to the cloud in real time and displayed on an interactive map. Vibrant stories shared by participants would help encourage friends to get out on their bikes, and over time, rider contributions to the experience map would provide useful insights for cycleway planners.

Project Sensibel
The Concept

An Open Heat Map

At the core of the challenge is to create a device and interface that encourages citizen participation. To achieve this, the process must be citizen led. Participants can contribute anonymously to an open heat map, adding to a community of experiences and stories that have the power to influence the way we move around our cities.
Biking is a sensory experience. On a bike, you are closer to nature, you physically feel the elements. Every bump on the road. The sound of nature and traffic. Wind and gravity working for and against you. It's a heightened experience that feeds personal stories, both positive and negative. By focusing on capturing and sharing stories about riding, the App has the potential to increase awareness of the biker’s journey. In turn, these stories have the potential to influence other people to ride and shape the way our city is built.
With an investment of $15,000 from Internet NZ, Fab Lab Chch developed a minimum viable product – a thumb activated device that sends rider feedback to a mobile phone, then to the cloud. The device and App, rapidly prototyped over eight weeks, have all the fundamental technology proposed in the original the bell concept.
The Prototype

Features

App:
- GPS Tracking
- Bluetooth device syncing
- Journey mapping
- Experience location plotting

Device:
- Bluetooth enabled
- 2x Buttons (good/bad)
Project Sensibel

Field Testing
Objectives

The objective of trial one was to:

- Test the connectivity of the App and the device.
- Gather user feedback on the concept of a community aggregated platform for cycling.
- Collect user-defined definitions for “good” and “bad”.
- Understand what would motivate and incentivise people to engage with the platform and cycle in general.
Trial 1: 6th September 2015

Participants

A diverse group of riders from different background and experience were invited to the trial.

8 Males, 8 Females
Ages: 20-45
non-riders to very experienced riders

With thanks to:
Spark Bikes
Trial 1: 6th September 2015

Routes Travelled & Approach

**Short Ride**
10 mins around the CBD with varying terrain

**Spark Route**
Connecting all the Spark Bike stations around the city

**Uni Cycle**
New route that connects UC with the CBD

**Approach:** Riders we asked take a ride and log a positive (green) or negative (red) experience with the device with no prior input. After the ride, an open discussion was facilitated to draw out experiences and feedback.
General Discussion: The Concept

“In the general sense, wearable technology makes you stop and think about what is going on. You notice all the things. Interesting experience but when does the novelty wear off.”

“Conversation starter when riding with others. Turns subconscious thought into hard reality.”

“Often don’t remember the good or bad points at the end of a journey. Often think at the time “I wish I could let the council know about this”. It would be nice to able to do this. Integrate with social media or council app.”

“Use it to map out cycle routes in the future. A collective experience.”

“When biking you have a sense of powerlessness. You are always against something. It is a good way to feel like you have control of some aspect of the environment. It creates a link between feeling annoyed but I am here and I can do something about this.”

“Network of subjective experiments. See what trips look like. Car vs bike comparison. More likely to log negative experiences which results in a bad image for cycling.”

The whole trip is a positive feature, so it is easier to mark the negatives. Negatives were generally infrastructure related. Some were bike related.
Trial 1: 6th September 2015

General Discussion: Device & Platform

Device:

- Can it be built into the handle bars?
- Lever for the thumb.
- Left and right button.
- Slider, like the classic bell eg a big ring if it is bad.
- Duration of bell press to register intensity
- Think of a horn or wave as you would when driving.

How to keep this alive

- Social media
- Theme rides
- Attractions
- Geocaching
- Collection points
- Cafe owners - tag it
- Support other cycling events
- Selfie orienteering

Device:

- Have a button for infrastructure and one for other people's behaviours and other elements, eg I pressed the button when I smelt flowers.
Trial 1: 6th September 2015

General Discussion: Positive Experiences

Parking for bikes  
Left hand turn protection  
Hook turn options  
Pavers - Old European  
Intersections with advance box for cyclists  
Good cycling specific signage  
Nice architecture  
Patient drivers  
Cars that give you space  
Separated cycleway  
Smell  
Moving  
Nice Weather  
Smooth under wheels  
Not crossing tram tracks  
Vitamin D  
Breaking the law  
Speed was safer  
Smiles give/recieved  
Visible bike parking  
Families out with kids  
Park greenery  
Other cyclists  
Tailwind  
Sunshine  
-catching the green  
-bike light and not stopping  
Smell of flowers  
Car free street (New Regent)  
Riding in a park  
Being off road  
Nice views  
Riding next to someone else and talking  
New un-damaged path  
When pedestrians notice, they get out of your way  
Minimal traffic  
Drivers waited  
Taking the lane doesn't get you honked at  
Riding through the square (no traffic)  
Open flat road  
Smooth pavement  
Dedicated bike lane on most roads  
Easy riding off the street eg park  
Quick convenient travel  
Green lights  
People on spark bikes  
Wide clear path for cycles only  
Small hill to go down  
Nice view  
Quick light changes on unicycle way  
Shoulder on Colombo  
Ramps on Victoria Square  
Some drivers respect your space  
Guided tour  
Cycling specific infrastructure  
Smooth tarmac  
Traffic lights with bike priority  
No body else  
No cars  
Awesome photo opportunities
Trial 1: 6th September 2015

General Discussion: Negative Experiences

Turning right
Intersections too narrow to share with cars when stopped
Lack of bike parking
Bike parking not suited to most bikes
Crappy road surface
Bike parking at a big distance to key destinations compared to car parking
Turn lanes hard to access by bike lane
Puncture
Low hanging signs near miss with headroom
Headwind
Narrow shared paths
Intersections without advance boxes

Crossing tram tracks
Cycling alongside tramlines and pedestrians without having designated cycle space
Too many people on the shared paths
Stopping to push bike bottom
Non-working sensors on path
Traffic lights that don’t give bikes priority
Rubbish on the road, glass
Narrow roads with cars
Poor visibility on corners when turning
Road works

Slippery brick on path
Cars on my road
Bumpy roads
Tam tracks
Inattentive drivers
Street furniture
Poorly designed intersections
Gravel
Cycle lane to nowhere
Road cones
Shared space with cars
Obstacles in bike lane
Potholes
Glass on the road
Red lights
Bad smells
Tram tracks
Head wind
Confusion on shared paths

Trams
Bad parking in cycle ways
Tram tracks
Turning right
Transition to cycles ways
Transition from road to cycleway (Latimer square)
Back pedal bikes
Car doors
One way streets
Pedestrians not aware of shared path etiquette
Cars
Hazards that force you onto the road eg road cones
No cycling specific signage
People walking backwards into us
General Discussion: Incentivising Use

Gamify idea
Backing current events
eg Parking day
Benchmarking KPI
(CCC) of improvements
based on data
Due determines
allocation of cycle
infrastructure funding
(from councils)
Instant gratification
Followers based on
your cool journeys
Tracked and public
visible data
Survey and prizes
Discuss bigger picture
Non-monetary
Positive feedback
Benefits to future
generations

Show the difference it makes
Community
Data on cycling uptake numbers
Highlight individual contributions
Instant data and photo feedback
Direct council link
Reduction of “red” spots
“Heat map”
Free access to spark bikes via points
Free bike services
Positive badges
Evidence that people are using it (app)

Data in exchange for bike related services
Free coffee
Geocaching - pokemon catch em all
Data use and positive outcomes
Online strava community
Qualitative over quantitative
Feeling good about enacting positive social change
Knowing where the good routes are
Free
Warm and fuzzies
Collective impact
Social movement
Sense of freedom

Resulting data, own and others, easily accessible
Live tracking
Goals to work toward
Logging own personal data for own use (maps, distance etc)
Non-FOMO
Knowing the transport planners are listening
Integration with other apps
Reliability
Ease of use
Seeing actual positive change as a result of the data
Assurance it won’t be used for nefarious purposes (GSCB etc)
Knowing that a broad demographic is using the apps
Outtakes

The Device and Platform
On the whole, most people felt the device gave them a voice and a way to communicate their experiences, whether it be socially or to the council. In many respects it gave the rider a sense of control.

The Form and Interaction
The more ergonomic the form the better. As well as being desirable, it must be able to communicate the range of emotion across the positive and negative spectrum.

Experiences
The range of experiences captured can be distilled down into categories for easier cataloguing and analysis.

For example:
- Physical Infrastructure
- Bike mechanics
- Environmental
- Spatial
- Empathy

These need further defining and refining so they’re clear and quick to understand.

Incentivising participation
Intrinsic motivation came through as the main point. Riders participating get a sense that they’re contributing to improving the biking experience. They want to be connected to the community, and to see some positive change happening as part of the contributed data.
Trial 2: Date to be confirmed

**Trial 2: Objectives**

Test some different ergonomic forms of the device.

Test improved beta App and allow for direct user interaction

Trial devices with a group of cyclists over a weekend, to allow for longer and more diverse journeys.

Feedback on the user interface design

Discuss community orientated roll-out plan.
The App: User Interface

The App is only engaged at the beginning and end of the journey, or at points of interest during the journey where the biker has disembarked.

All interaction during the journey is done via the Sensibel device attached to the handlebars of the bike.
Next Step

The App: Mapping & Annotation

Positive and negative experiences are plotted along the biker’s journey.

Once completed the biker can add an extra layer of context through imagery or story.

These stories, or the entire journey can be shared socially.
Next Step

The App: Socialising & Data

Users can initiate or participate in local biking related events and invite friends.

Users of the App can also follow fellow bikers and see their favourite rides or places.

The platform can be used to show most popular cycling routes, trouble areas or even report a hazard directly to the council.

Data captured can be analysed by urban planners to improve the hard infrastructure of a city and improve the biking experience.
Prototyping Team

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- AECOM
- Sustainable Business Network

Principal Funders

Bike 2050 strategy
Cheers!

For more information please visit
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