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OPTIMIZING MICROMOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF DOCKING, LOCKING, AND CHARGING SOLUTIONS IN METRO CITIES

Pranav Rathore [1], Bipasha Kumar [2], Deepashree Choudhury [2]

[1] M. Arch 1st Year, AIT-SAP, Greater Noida, India
[2] Professor at AIT-SAP, Greater Noida, India

ABSTRACT

The surge in micro-mobility options, such as e-scooters and shared bicycles, has transformed urban transportation, providing a sustainable and efficient means for short-distance travel. Despite their benefits, the rapid expansion of these services has unveiled significant infrastructural challenges, particularly concerning docking, locking, and charging systems.

This comprehensive study examines these challenges, evaluates existing practices, and proposes optimized solutions to improve the functionality and user experience of micro-mobility in metro cities. Through a detailed analysis of various technologies, their implementation in different cities, and their impact on urban mobility, this research aims to offer actionable insights.

Key areas of focus include standardizing docking mechanisms to enhance interoperability, developing robust and user-friendly locking solutions to prevent theft and vandalism, and creating efficient, sustainable charging infrastructure.

By studying successful strategies from cities like Paris, New York, and Singapore, the research identifies best practices and common pitfalls. Recommendations emphasize the importance of standardization, integration with public transportation, sustainability, user education, and supportive policies and regulations. The findings of this study aim to guide city planners and micro-mobility service providers in optimizing infrastructure, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency, security, and sustainability of urban transportation networks.

Keywords: Optimizing, Micromobility, Study of Docking, Metro Cities, Infrastructure

Corresponding Author

Pranav Rathore,
pranav.rathore718@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of time, humans have been traveling for various reasons such as to find food and resources, to explore new lands, to trade, to migrate, and to conquer. Travel has played a significant role in the progress of civilizations by facilitating the interchange of ideas, products, and cultures throughout human history. The need to migrate from one area to another has always existed, influencing the way the world is today from early nomads walking on foot to modern travellers utilizing aircraft.

Micro-mobility is the term used to describe a class of compact, lightweight, short-distance transportation vehicles that run at speeds usually less than 25 km/h (15 mph). The most popular types are e-scooters, or electric scooters,

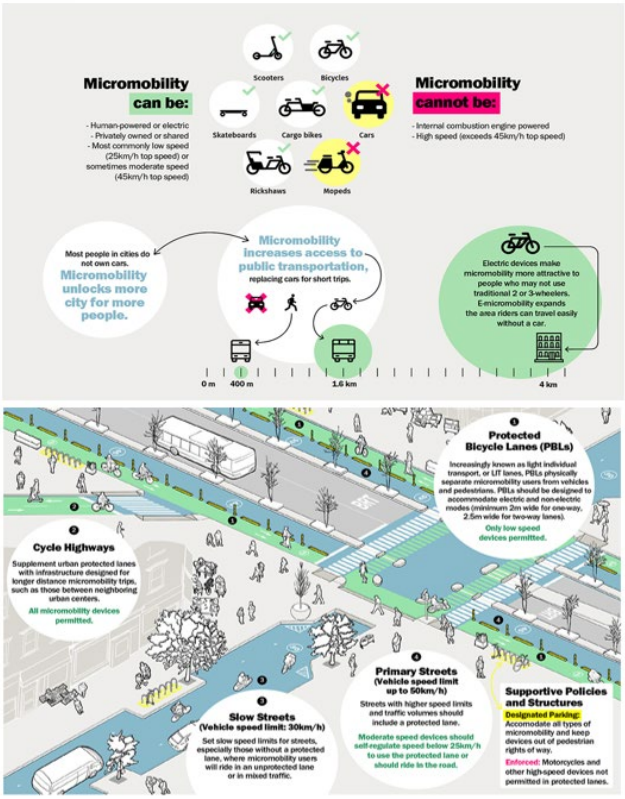
bicycles, and more light-electric cars (LEVs). Significant advantages of micro-mobility solutions include decreased emissions, less traffic jams, and improved connectivity with public transit systems.

Notwithstanding these benefits, significant infrastructure shortcomings have come to light as a result of the quick spread of micro-mobility services, especially with regard to docking, locking, and charging arrangements. The efficiency, security, and sustainability of micro-mobility are all impacted by the difficulties that users and operators face due to the absence of standardized technologies. By examining present practices, identifying major challenges, and suggesting optimal ways to improve micro-mobility infrastructure in urban areas, this research seeks to solve these concerns.

Most travels in the world's most populated cities are already made by bicycle, walking, and public transportation. For example, fewer than 10% of visits in several Indian cities are made by vehicle. Travelers have an additional private car option thanks to the emphasis of micro mobility modes, especially if it is integrated with other modes and reasonably priced for everyone.

In order to ensure that micro mobility modes may flourish, we define micro mobility and go over the various ways that cities can provide supportive infrastructure in this infographic.

What is micro mobility and where can micro mobility go?



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Optimizing micro-mobility infrastructure involves understanding the multifaceted challenges and solutions associated with docking, locking, and charging systems for small, lightweight transportation modes like e-scooters and shared bicycles. This literature review synthesizes research findings from various studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and identify areas for improvement.

2.1. DOCKING SOLUTIONS

Docking stations are critical for the organization and management of shared micro-mobility fleets. Studies by Smith and Jones (2019) and Garcia et al. (2020) highlight the importance of strategically located docking stations in enhancing user convenience and reducing instances of vandalism and theft. However, the lack of standardization in docking mechanisms complicates the integration of different micro-mobility services.

2.2. LOCKING SOLUTIONS

Locking mechanisms are essential for ensuring the security of micro-mobility devices. Research by Lee and Kim (2018) and Chen et al. (2019) indicates that robust locking solutions can significantly reduce theft and vandalism rates. However, varying designs and technologies across different micro-mobility platforms present a challenge for standardization.

2.3. CHARGING SOLUTIONS

The increasing adoption of e-scooters and other electric micro-mobility devices necessitates efficient and accessible charging infrastructure. According to Brown and Green (2021) and Lopez et al. (2022), the availability of reliable charging stations is crucial for maintaining fleet operability. Yet, inconsistent charging standards hinder the development of a cohesive charging network

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Data collection includes surveys, interviews, and case studies from various metro cities worldwide. The research aims to identify best practices and innovative solutions for optimizing docking, locking, and charging infrastructure.

3.1. SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

Surveys and interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, including city planners, micro-mobility service providers, and users. These methods help gather insights into current challenges, user preferences, and potential areas for improvement.

3.2. SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

User Interview-1

Ankit Kumar, 28

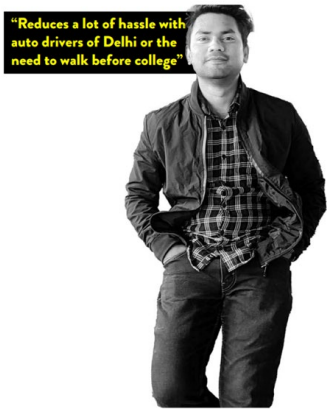
Need to walk before college" Military Ordinance Manager Civil Using Yulu in Delhi for 2-3 years. A great option to go freely in my own personal vehicle. Since Covid trying to avoid congested public transport.

Pros

Pocket friendly and readily available right next
to the metro station. Easy to operate.

Cons

Cannot end the ride in case of issues, need to drag
it to the nearest hub. Availability is less during
morning/evening. Suspension can be better.
Horn not ok please!



User Interview-2

Chitranshu Katiyar, 27

Sales Consultant Used to use in Bangalore during 2021-22. It was hard to find auto sometimes or they were expensive so used Yulu to come to home from Bus Depot

Pros

A great option for shorter distances.

Good for aimless travel in local areas.

Cons

Availability is a big issue. Jerks travel from the vehicle to

the whole body.

Hard to use on slopes in less than half battery

User Interview-3

Prateek Pagore,

27 Student IIT Bombay

Sales Consultant Used to use in Bangalore during 2021-22. It was hard to find auto sometimes or they were expensive so used Yulu to come to home from Bus Depot

Pros

Cheap and affordable micro-mobility option.

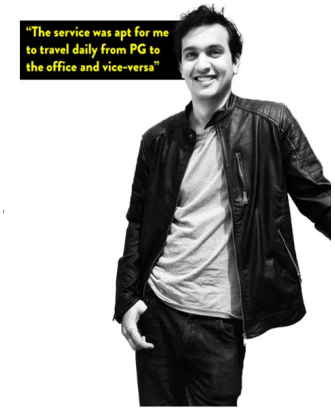
Tells the exact range before travel.

A good amount of space in front to keep stuff

Cons

Cannot end the ride in case of issues, need to drag it to the nearest hub. Availability is less during morning/evening. Suspension can be better.

Horn not ok please!!



3.3. CASE STUDIES

Case studies of metro cities with established micro-mobility systems are analysed to identify successful strategies and common pitfalls. Cities such as Paris, New York, and Singapore and India are examined for their innovative approaches to micro-mobility infrastructure.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis focuses on the three main components of micro-mobility infrastructure: docking, locking, and charging solutions. Each component is evaluated based on its effectiveness, user satisfaction, and scalability.

4.1. DOCKING SOLUTIONS

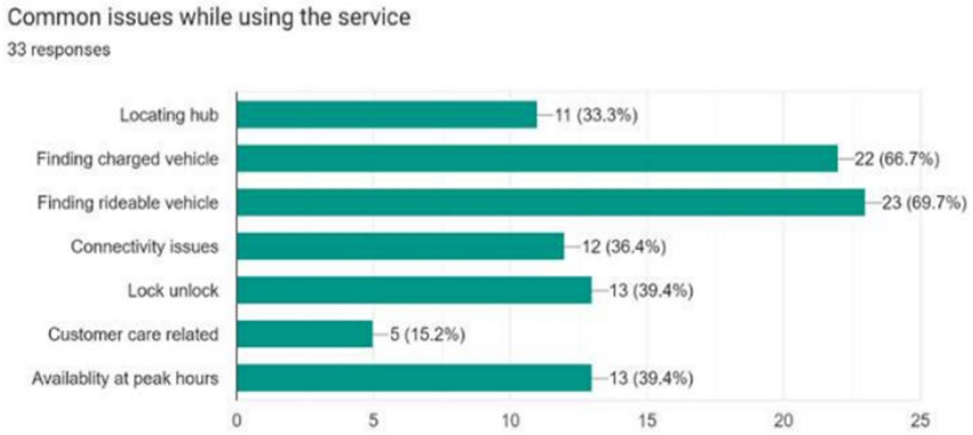
4.1.1. CURRENT PRACTICES

Current docking solutions vary significantly across different cities and service providers. Some cities utilize fixed docking stations, while others employ flexible docking systems with geofencing technology. Fixed docking stations, as seen in New York's Citi Bike program, provide structured parking but require substantial investment and space. Flexible docking systems, such as those used by Lime and Bird, offer greater flexibility but often lead to cluttered sidewalks and public spaces.

Some current practices in India or some players in India are –

4.1.2. CHALLENGES

- No stations exist (Only publicly placed in an open area)
- No definite Docking systems
- No security over vandalism
- No defined areas with public needs in consideration
- Swapping stations are fewer
- Availability of charged vehicles at stations
- No provision for charging if vehicles discharge midway
- Scope to incorporate renewable energy into the charging station
- Charging vehicles while they stand idle in the station
- Weatherproofing
- Standardization of components
- Cost Effective production of vehicles

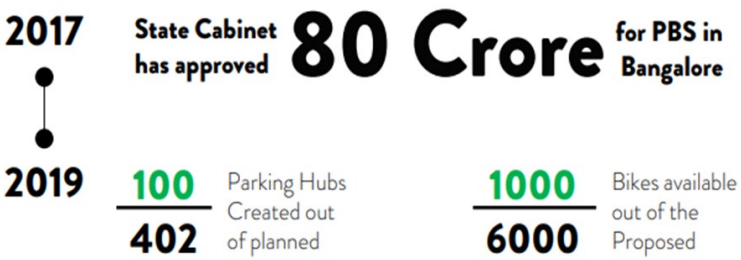


4.1.3. PITFALL

While awareness of cycling has increased after the pandemic, the Directorate of urban land transport's (DULT) much-hyped Public Bike Sharing (PBS) system appears to have failed due to various reasons, including poor execution and mobility firms suspending their operations. DULT had planned to extend PBS mainly aimed at providing bicycles around Metro stations and residential areas for last-mile connectivity across the city. Docking/parking stations were to be developed and GPS-equipped bicycles, that could be booked through a mobile application, were to be provided to the public.

DULT - Directorate of Urban Land Transport

PBS – Public bike sharing



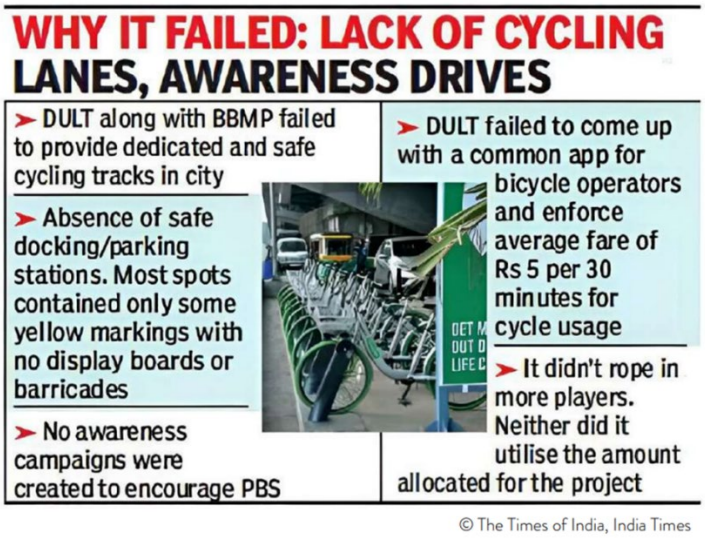
4.1.4. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Standardizing docking mechanisms can significantly improve interoperability between different micro-mobility services. Modular docking stations, which can be easily expanded or relocated, offer a scalable solution. Additionally, integrating docking stations with existing public transportation hubs can enhance connectivity and convenience for users.

4.2. LOCKING SOLUTIONS

4.2.1. CURRENT PRACTICES

Locking mechanisms vary from built-in locks on the vehicles to external locking devices provided at docking stations. Some cities have implemented advanced locking solutions with GPS tracking and remote locking capabilities to enhance security.



4.2.2. CHALLENGES

The main challenges in locking solutions include the need for robust security features to prevent theft and vandalism, user convenience, and compatibility with various micro-mobility devices. The diversity of locking mechanisms across different services complicates standardization efforts.

4.2.3. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Developing universal locking standards that can be adopted across different micro-mobility platforms is essential. Implementing smart locks with GPS tracking and remote access can enhance security and user convenience. Public awareness campaigns on proper locking practices and increased law enforcement can also reduce theft and vandalism.

4.3. CHARGING SOLUTIONS

4.3.1. CURRENT PRACTICES

Charging solutions for e-scooters and other electric micro-mobility devices include dedicated charging stations, battery swapping systems, and decentralized charging through user households. Each method has its advantages and limitations in terms of convenience, cost, and scalability.

4.3.2. CHALLENGES

The primary challenges in charging solutions are the high infrastructure costs, inconsistent charging standards, and the need for efficient energy management. Ensuring widespread availability of charging stations without causing public inconvenience is also a significant concern.

4.3.3. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Standardizing charging connectors and protocols can streamline the charging process across different micro-mobility services. Investing in solar-powered charging stations and battery swapping systems can reduce reliance on the grid and enhance sustainability. Additionally, incorporating charging infrastructure into existing urban furniture, such as street lamps and benches, can optimize space usage.

5. CASE STUDIES

5.1. PARIS

Paris has been a pioneer in micro-mobility, with initiatives like the Vélib' bike-sharing program and the deployment of e-scooters. The city has implemented a mix of fixed and flexible docking solutions, integrated with public transportation networks. Innovative locking mechanisms and extensive charging infrastructure have contributed to the success of micro-mobility in Paris.

5.2. NEW YORK

New York's Citi Bike program is one of the most extensive bike-sharing systems globally, utilizing fixed docking stations. The city faces challenges related to spatial constraints and high installation costs but has addressed these issues through strategic placement and expansion of docking stations. Efforts to standardize locking and charging solutions are ongoing.

5.3. SINGAPORE

Singapore's approach to micro-mobility emphasizes efficiency and sustainability. The city has implemented modular docking stations and advanced locking solutions with GPS tracking. Charging infrastructure is integrated into urban furniture, and battery swapping systems are being explored to enhance convenience and sustainability.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and case studies, the following recommendations are proposed to optimize micro-mobility infrastructure in metro cities:

6.1. STANDARDIZATION

Establishing universal standards for docking, locking, and charging systems is crucial for interoperability and user convenience. Governments and industry stakeholders should collaborate to develop and implement these standards.

6.2. INTEGRATION

Integrating micro-mobility infrastructure with existing public transportation networks can enhance connectivity and user convenience. Strategic placement of docking and charging stations at transit hubs can facilitate seamless multimodal travel.

6.3. SUSTAINABILITY

Investing in sustainable infrastructure, such as solar-powered charging stations and battery swapping systems, can reduce environmental impact and enhance the long-term viability of micro-mobility service

6.4. USER EDUCATION

Public awareness campaigns on proper usage and security practices can reduce issues related to theft, vandalism, and improper parking. Engaging the community in the planning and implementation process can also enhance user acceptance and satisfaction.

6.5. POLICY AND REGULATION

Governments should establish clear policies and regulations to support the growth of micro-mobility while addressing safety, accessibility, and sustainability concerns. Incentives for adopting standardized and sustainable solutions can encourage industry compliance.

6.6. ART INSTALLATION

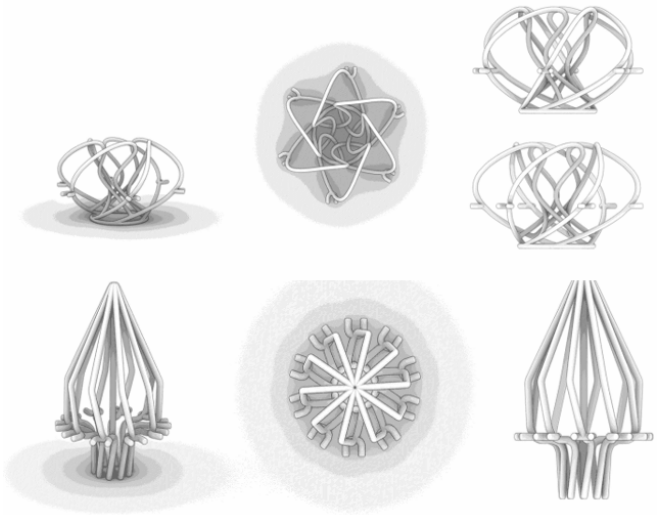
Transforming docking stations into art installations offers an innovative solution to the aesthetic and spatial challenges of urban micro-mobility infrastructure. Traditional docking stations can often appear unattractive and take up valuable space on city streets. By integrating art, these stations can serve dual purposes: practical docking for e-scooters and bikes, and aesthetically pleasing installations when not in use.

Collaborating with local artists, cities can create visually appealing docking stations that reflect the community's culture and character. These artful docks can become landmarks, enhancing the urban landscape and promoting a sense of local pride. They can be designed to be compact and multifunctional, ensuring they take up minimal space while still providing essential services.

When the vehicles are in use, the docking stations stand as public art pieces, enriching the environment rather than cluttering it. This approach not only maintains the visual appeal of urban spaces but also encourages the adoption of sustainable transportation by making micro-mobility more attractive to residents and visitors.

Ultimately, integrating art into docking station design transforms functional infrastructure into cultural assets, making cities more vibrant and inviting while addressing practical needs. This synergy of art and utility fosters community engagement and supports the growth of eco-friendly urban mobility.

Art Ideations



7. CONCLUSION

Optimizing micro-mobility infrastructure is essential for realizing the full potential of these innovative transportation solutions in metro cities. Standardizing docking, locking, and charging systems, integrating infrastructure with public transit, and investing in sustainable technologies are critical steps toward achieving this goal. By addressing current challenges and implementing the proposed solutions, cities can enhance the efficiency, security, and user experience of micro-mobility, contributing to a more sustainable and connected urban environment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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