

Car-Sharing stations in public street space supports growth in customer numbers for Car-Sharing

Placing appropriately sized Car-Sharing stations at suitable locations in the city is crucial to the art of Car-Sharing management. On one hand, they should be placed as close as possible to the homes of individual customers and/or to the workplaces of commercial customers so that the distance to the cars is as short as possible. From surveys, we know that the optimal distance is about a 500 to 700 m walk for the users to the Car-Sharing vehicles. Beyond that, the attractiveness of the stations drops. On the other hand, the stations must be located such that they are also able to attract potential future customers. The vehicles must, after all, be used to their best capacity and operated economically.

In Germany, Switzerland, and Austria to date Car-Sharing stations have been located almost exclusively on leased private property. In some cases, these may also be private sites that are in the possession of public authorities or transport operators. In densely populated, mixed-use city districts, it is often impossible for Car-Sharing operators to increase service levels by adding additional parking spots on private property as the land there is very limited. In such urban areas, most of which are found around city centres, the potential for Car-Sharing is particularly high.

In order to increase the number of vehicles and station locations in parallel with the growth in customer numbers, it's necessary to also have access to land for parking spots on public street space. Some European countries have granted local authorities the necessary legal foundation to do so – and this has proven very beneficial to growth in Car-Sharing in these countries.

Example: Belgium

In Belgium, national lawmakers have turned over to local authorities responsibility for deciding if and when to which transport services they would like to offer reserved land in public street space. As Car-Sharing is recognised as an environmentally friendly mobility service, local authorities work together with Car-Sharing providers and authorise Car-Sharing stations in public space. These can also be protected from unauthorised parking by foldable barriers whenever necessary to

ensure smooth operations.

Even groups who simply share cars among friends and neighbours – and who are members of the support organisation Autopia – enjoy the benefit of reserved parking spaces in some Belgian cities.



Fig. 1: Car-Sharing station in Wallonia (Source: cambio Belgium)



Fig. 2: Car-Sharing station in a business district in Brussels (Source: cambio Belgium)

Example: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

In the Netherlands too, cities are granted the right through a by-law to decide for themselves who may park in reserved areas in public street space.



Fig. 3: Greenwheels station overview for Amsterdam (Source: Greenwheels)

Amsterdam is a good example of how sensible it is to give lawmaking authority to the city administration to allow Car-Sharing parking spots at their discretion and in accordance with local circumstances. Anyone who has walked around the wonderful central core of Amsterdam inside the Gracht ring can appreciate how limited public street space there is. In many streets, there are only a few parking spots on one side of the street for stationary vehicles. This is not nearly enough to accommodate the number of cars found in comparable large cities. Because of the high ground water level, the building of underground car parks in the district is out of the question.

The dense network of stations of Greenwheels (the largest Car-Sharing provider in the Netherlands and in Amsterdam) depicted in Figure 3, shows that Car-Sharing presents a real alternative to private car ownership. Lack of parking for private automobiles can be compensated for through Car-Sharing without any loss of convenience. The dense network of stations in public street space ensures that Car-Sharing vehicles are available in very close proximity to homes and workplaces in the inner city.

Example: Helsinki, Finland

The only Finnish Car-Sharing provider to date, City Car Club, has more than 90 stations in Helsinki and in three neighbouring communities. 40 of these are located in Helsinki's public street space, the rest on leased private property.

In Finland, local authorities have extensive autonomy over how they deal with their street space. Through national legislation, they are neither allowed nor forbidden to reserve public property for Car-Sharing. Helsinki's city government has interpreted this so that it is possible to rent on street parking places for Car-Sharing. It has made on street parking places available exclusively for the Car-Sharing provider and has designated them as no stopping zones except for Car-Sharing vehicles. City Car Club pays rent appropriate to the area for these spaces.



Fig. 4: Reserved Car-Sharing station in Helsinki; text below the "no stopping" sign: "except City Car Club vehicles" (Source: City Car Club)

Example: Italy

Because of national legislation (Circulation Code), reserved parking in public street space is currently solely permitted for public transport vehicles and vehicles used by severely disabled people. These spaces can be protected from unauthorised parking by towing. But cities are also allowed to keep certain areas free from regular traffic as zones of commercial activity. Car-Sharing may be counted in this category. Users pay a fee for access to this space, but city governments may approve fee waivers in case where the use is declared to be in the

public interest. But the local police authority – with the exception of the metropolitan areas of Rome and Milan – is currently not allowed to remove illegally parked cars from these areas.



Fig. 5:
Reserved
Car-
Sharing
station
in Turin
(Source:
car city
club s.r.l.)



Fig. 6:
Reserved
Car-
Sharing
station
in Bolzano
(Source:
coop car
sharing
bz)

Iniziativa Car Sharing (ICS), the publicly supported coordination centre of Italian Car-Sharing, has prepared a draft bill that would make Car-Sharing stations in Italy legally equivalent to public transport stops, thus giving them full protection of the law. This law was introduced into the parliament in April 2009, but has not yet been adopted.

Example: Cork, Ireland

In Ireland national legislation empowers local councils to designate on street parking spaces for certain categories of road user. Although Car-Sharing cars are not included in these categories at present, Cork City Council has reached an agreement with the Garda Síochána (national police authority) in Cork to allow the City Council to provide, on a pilot basis, designated

on street parking spaces exclusively to GoCar, the Car-Sharing service launched in September 2008. In total there are eight spaces at four GoBases (car stations) in the city centre, where both City Council street signs and GoCar's signage and automatic barriers denote and protect the authorised car park spaces.

Cork City Council hopes that this pilot experiment with on-street spaces will be successful and is working with the Department of Transport in Ireland to amend the legislation to include Car-Sharing cars in the categories allowed to be designated under national legislation.

Drawing conclusions from the experience of Car-Sharing stations in public street space

In summary, it can be concluded that in the European countries in which Car-Sharing stations may be located in public street space, this privilege is granted by local authorities in a responsible manner. City administrations decide where Car-Sharing stations should be established in public space and where they stand in competition with other public uses for the limited street space. Wherever national legislation or the decision-making authority of local authorities has allowed Car-Sharing stations to be located in public space, it has contributed to the advancement of Car-Sharing. In none of these countries has it triggered an avalanche of claims on public space.

And in other European countries with developed Car-Sharing schemes?

In some European countries with developed Car-Sharing schemes a legislation is missing which allows on-street parking stations for Car-Sharing vehicles.

Fig 7: On
street
parking
in
Cork
city
(Source:
Mendes
GoCar
Ltd.)



In March 2007, the German federal Transportation Ministry brought forward draft legislation which would create a legal foundation to empower local administrations nationwide to permit Car-Sharing stations. This draft legislation received broad agreement from unions, local authorities and German states. The parliamentary discussion has been impeded by a veto from the federal Economy Ministry which sees the legislation as putting car rental firms at a disadvantage.

As there is currently no uniform legal foundation, some local authorities and states have looked for fallback solutions. In a few cities, individual stations have been permitted based on grounds which are currently in legal grey areas. There are also parliamentary initiatives in Austria that are striving for a unified legal foundation for Car-Sharing stations in public street space.

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