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Will the Copenhagen Wheel Work For India?

By: Siddharth Bhatia | Feb 02, 2010

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Today I would like to touch upon a topic covered in a national pink paper. It has to do with a marvel called the Copenhagen Wheel that's been developed by MITians, (who else) - basically comprising 4 members one of who was an Indian by the name of Myshkin Ingawale. He was independently working on a similar concept, and got in touch with the others at MIT. They invited him over and hours of R&D later the contraption was conceptualized. But can something like that work here?

This concept involves setting a special disc on the rear wheel of a bicycle, which converts the latter into a green, eco friendly mobility machine, which can be controlled by your smartphone. It also does not use fuel, but batteries- they can be charged either by pedaling, doing downhill, braking or by simply plugging into a wall socket. It basically stores the energy dissipated when you brake, and can use that for an acceleration boost later. *Click below to watch demo video*



But that's not all, in fact the most impressive sounding feature is that it can map pollution levels, traffic congestion and road conditions in real-time. According to the officials, "you can use your phone to unlock and lock your bike, change gears and select how much the motor assists you. As you cycle, the wheel's sensing unit is also capturing your effort level and information about your surroundings, including road conditions, carbon monoxide, noise, ambient temperature and relative humidity."

Now that's some serious innovation, but then again the cynic in me poses some questions, especially India centric questions. The concept of cycling to work is still considered a joke, and obviously only can work for comparatively shorter distances. The traffic in a place like Mumbai can be a Chaos Theoretician's worst nightmare. Also let's not start on the pollution levels. Of course, we can still use the core competency of the wheel, that is to add power while riding through stored energy, especially in serious traffic where the cyclist can keep braking and using the energy. All in all something like this really should be introduced, at least in a niche manner. I for one would love to try it.

“ The vision behind the wheel is to retain the Joy of Cycling even while benefiting from the benefits of motorized mobility. ”

Tags: [Copenhagen Wheel]

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