

THE BOITE A VELO BICYCLES CREATING JOB AND SERVICES IN NANTES

By Kim Assaël

[Boîtes à Vélo](#) is a collective innovation started in Nantes (France) with 24 entrepreneurial business that in 2012 decided to leave back their white vans and used their cargo bikes for delivering goods and services. This basic idea to use a bicycle with a box attached and the choice to use a collective for the managing of the enterprise rapidly shown up its great potential. In 2014 the cooperative business Boîtes à Vélo received the award *Talent du Vélo 2014* for the entrepreneurship category and on June 2015, the association received the [Ashden Eurostar Award](#) for sustainable Transport.

The idea of Boîtes à Vélo go along with the vocation of the city of Nantes, already Green Capital in 2013 and Velo City in 2015, bringing a message for the future generations internationally: that is possible to offer a diversified service to professionals or individuals bringing a positive impact on the environment of the neighborhoods in terms of minimization of carbon emissions.

This environmental business uses utility and cargo bikes for business purposes with a variety of bikes and great range of businesses involved. They deliver different kind of commercial, artisanal goods, services for the person, in whatever domain, through their commercial vehicles, pedaling in the city of Nantes. *Boîtes à Vélo* collectively work with over 7,000 clients each month. People stop them to speak to them in the street and their bikes are a real advantage in terms of marketing their services. The *Boîtes à Vélo*'s total distance travelled by bicycle is about 105,000 km per year.

The added value given by a collective managing the business has proved to be the most effective, enhancing its co-shared services (contact cards, flyers, insurance, repairing) as well as the entrepreneurial vocation of each member.

The *Boîtes à Vélo* make possible to rapidly deliver with flexibility and the members of the association sustain each other acting as a cross referral network of mutual guarantee. This association is demonstrating the multiple benefits of pedal-power for traders ranging from couriers to plumbers and computer repairs and the mutual benefit of being reciprocally recommended. Each member decide which type of bike they purchase (electric or not) and which type of box or trailer it will have, depending on the type of work they carry out and what equipment or goods they need to carry.

The choice to use bicycles is also cost-efficient. The collective's members make their businesses 20% more



profitable when using bikes rather than vans, due to reduced business travel costs, without the call-out charge that for gasoline vehicles includes insurance, fuel and parking. The cost of purchasing a bike is also much more convenient than the cost of a simple delivery van.

By 2016 the independent businesses of *Boîtes à Vélo* plans to have 30 to 50 members employed off the roads of the Nantes collective, opening opportunities that enhance landscapes, slowing down the traffic congestion and reinforcing social links. *Boîtes à Vélo* also have the potential to be a sustainable business that provides local employment.

As the European Federation of Bicycle recently underlined, *Boîtes à Vélo* is the first group of people that can normally work on bicycles and it is thank to the creation of this new concept that the innovative practice is increasingly developing.

This experience of sustainable urban transport is raising interest not only by the side of other French cities but also by different European countries.



To know more

[Boites à Velo website](#)

[Facebook Boites à Velo](#)

[Boites à Velo in Youtube](#)

[Article in ville-cyclables.org](#)

[VeloCity2015](#)

[Article in developpement-durable.gouv.fr](#)

[Article in weelz.fr](#)

[Article in consommateur-responsable.fr](#)

[European Cyclist's Federation](#)

[2015 Ashden Award](#)

