



Forming a Coalition to Bring Attention to E-Bike Regulation in Tianjin, China



A typical scene of e-bikes interacting with bicycles and motor vehicles

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The Problem

With billions of trips taken on China's roads, road crashes are the third leading cause of death for the country's citizens, and the top cause of death among Chinese aged 15 to 44. In China a significant number of crashes occur among vulnerable road users, including cyclists, pedestrians and operators of e-bike. E-bikes are scooters with electric powered engines. They can reach speeds up to 40 kilometres per hour, and are an extremely popular and affordable alternative to cars in China. The number of e-bikes in the country is estimated to exceed 200 million.

Tianjin, one of China's four municipalities, produces and sells 40% of the country's e-bikes. In that province, the number of e-bikes on the roads is more than double the number of cars. Tianjin's congested traffic situation led to more than 1,200 deaths and nearly 30,000 serious injuries from crashes in 2013. Many of these crashes were reported to be a result of traffic infractions committed by e-bikes, including over-speeding, ignoring traffic lights, illegal road crossing, and lack of safety provisions.



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The launch event of the Alliance

Due to this growing public health issue, the Tianjin Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (TJCDC), a major public health organization and GRSP grantee, was interested in bringing the government's attention to problems caused by the relatively new phenomenon of e-bikes.

The Policy Challenge

Despite the dangers created by millions of these new vehicles on the roads, Tianjin's road legislation, Several Management Regulations of Road Traffic Safety in Tianjin, does not contain any laws or regulations specific to e-bikes. Tianjin's road safety legislation was created in 2005, when there were few if any e-bikes on the roads. China's government has welcomed e-bikes in recent years as a way to reduce pollution and increase mobility among the population. Until recently, police have been reluctant to enforce penalties on e-bike riders, because they are considered vulnerable road users and also because e-bike penalties can be challenging to implement. In addition, very little data has been gathered on the impact of e-bikes and road crashes that result from their use.

Concerned about this situation, the TJCDC began to explore how they could inspire action on e-bike regulation. Given the lack of government attention to the issue, the TJCDC needed a way to draw policy maker attention to the issue.

The Tactic

The TJCDC decided to form and mobilize a coalition to bring awareness and attention to e-bike regulation. Coalitions are groups of organizations that join together to work towards a common goal. In situations where community problems are large or complex – such as the issue of

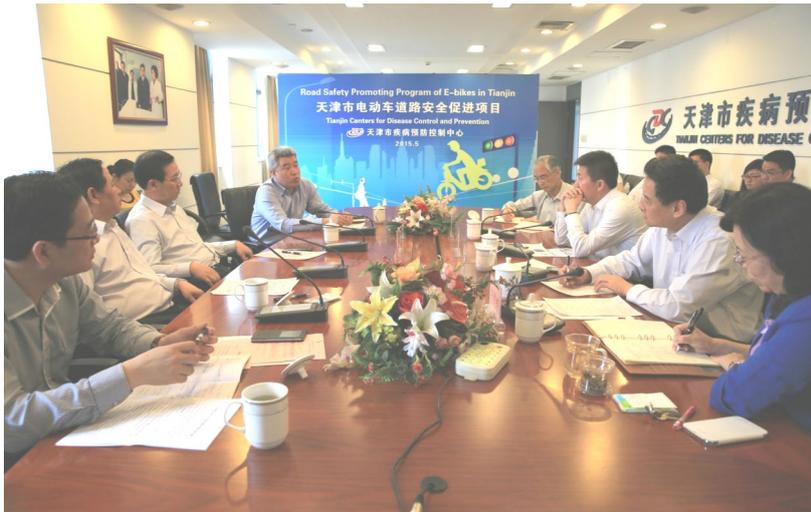
CHECKLIST: Forming a Coalition

- 1. Develop a core group to discuss a basic mission and vision for the coalition.** You don't need to have all the details solidified at this point, but make sure this group represents the issue and community well.
- 2. Identify and recruit the key members of the coalition.** These should include groups or individuals affected by the issue, as well as those with public and policy influence. When considering size, make sure the coalition is representative but still small enough to get things done.
- 3. Develop a plan, and agree on goals and objectives.** Your strategy should be clear and include roles for each member. Make sure your goals are measurable and achievable.
- 4. Communicate clearly and often.** The success, or failure, of a coalition often hinges on the quality of its communication. Make sure that lines of communication are open, and remember that good communication with the media, public and policy makers will increase your chances of success.
- 5. Utilize the group's diversity.** Each group will have different strengths. These might include data gathering, public outreach, policy influence, or mass media. Ensure that each activity allows groups to showcase their own assets.

Want to learn more? You can find other resources for advocates at www.grsproadsafety.org



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The Alliance meet to discuss strategy

The TJCDC developed a coalition to accomplish these goals, called the Tianjin Road Safety Alliance. As a public health organization, the TJCDC identified groups with influence in complementary areas, such as road safety, traffic enforcement, government, the local Red Cross, and mass media.

e-bikes in Tianjin – coalitions can often be more effective than a single organization. A number of groups working together for advocacy purposes can have a major impact in changing or establishing policy, mobilizing resources and changing behaviour. The media is also more likely to cover a story if it sees that there are a number of reputable organisations joining together to address an issue.

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Each organization brings a specific strength to the coalition. The Tianjin Public Security Traffic Administration Bureau has wide influence in traffic management regulation and management, and the Tianjin Health and Family Planning Commission is another government agency that holds significant influence with policy makers in Tianjin. The Office of Spiritual Civilization Construction is the government department in charge of mass media, such as newspapers and television, and has the capacity to support the Alliance's media campaigns. As a Red Cross affiliate, the Tianjin Red Cross Society has been able to bring legitimacy and support from civil society, as well as a strong relationship with the government.

After formation, the coalition held a launch and its first public awareness event to educate the public and policy makers about the potential dangers of e-bike and the need for regulation and enforcement. Future high-profile events include joint media events including public walks in a compelling way. The Alliance also plans to gather and share data about the need for e-bike regulation and advocate to policy makers for improved legislation.



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The Wrap-Up

A coalition can be an effective way to bring advocacy voices together to make a widespread impact. In the case of the Tianjin Road Safety Alliance, the partnership has the power to create a greater impact than any of its individual members alone. Going forward, the coalition hopes to strengthen e-bike regulation to reduce road traffic death and injury in Tianjin Province.