TRB 2026
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Washington, D.C.

Broken Bikes Considering On-site Repairs

Optimizing truck routes and repairer deployment to reduce user dissatisfaction

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Transportation Research Part E (2025)
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The Challenge: Bike Sharing Operations

Demand Imbalance

[Placeholder: Illustration of stations becoming empty or full during peak hours]

Stations become empty or full
→ Users cannot pick up/return bikes

Broken Bikes

On-site repairs   Off-site repairs

Barcelona: 67% bikes damaged
NYC: 2% need daily repairs

Current solutions use trucks to relocate bikes between stations.
But what about **repairing bikes on-site**?

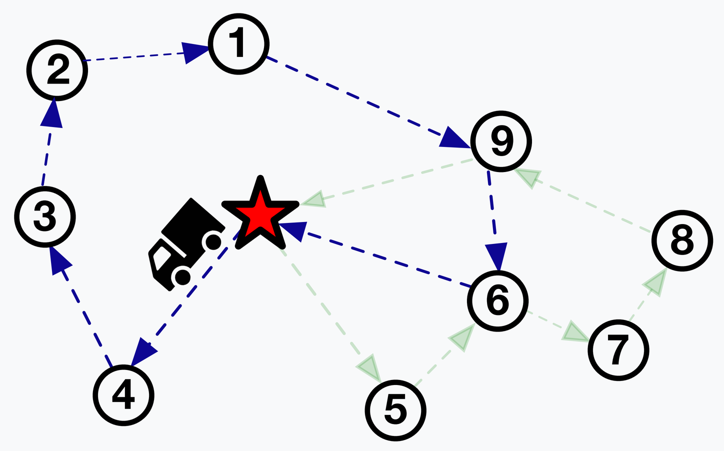
Research Gap & Our Question

Existing Studies Focus On:

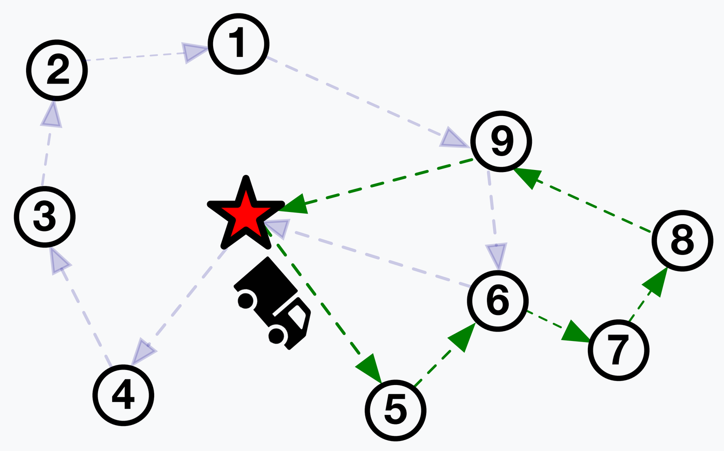
- ✓ Truck-based bike repositioning
- ✓ Moving broken bikes to repair depots
- × On-site repairs by dedicated repairers

Research Question

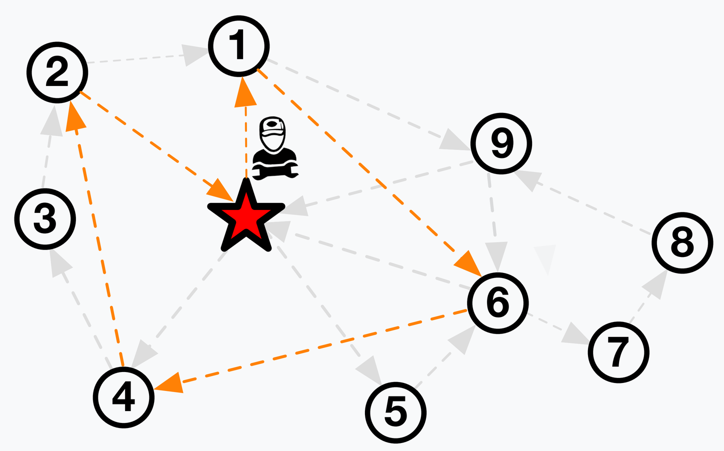
How can we **jointly optimize** truck repositioning and **on-site bike repairs** to improve service quality?



Truck 1 route: 0-4-3-2-1-9-6-0



Truck 2 route: 0-5-6–7-8–9-0



Repairer route: 0-1-6-4-2-0

Our integrated system: Trucks (blue routes) relocate bikes while repairers (dashed routes) fix bikes on-site.

Our Approach

We developed two solution methods:

Exact Method
Mathematical Optimization

- Time-indexed model
- Tracks bikes & repairers
- Minimizes dissatisfaction

For small networks (< 50 stations)

Fast Algorithm
Hybrid Genetic Search

- Scales to 500+ stations
- Smart time allocation
- Near-optimal solutions

For real-world city networks

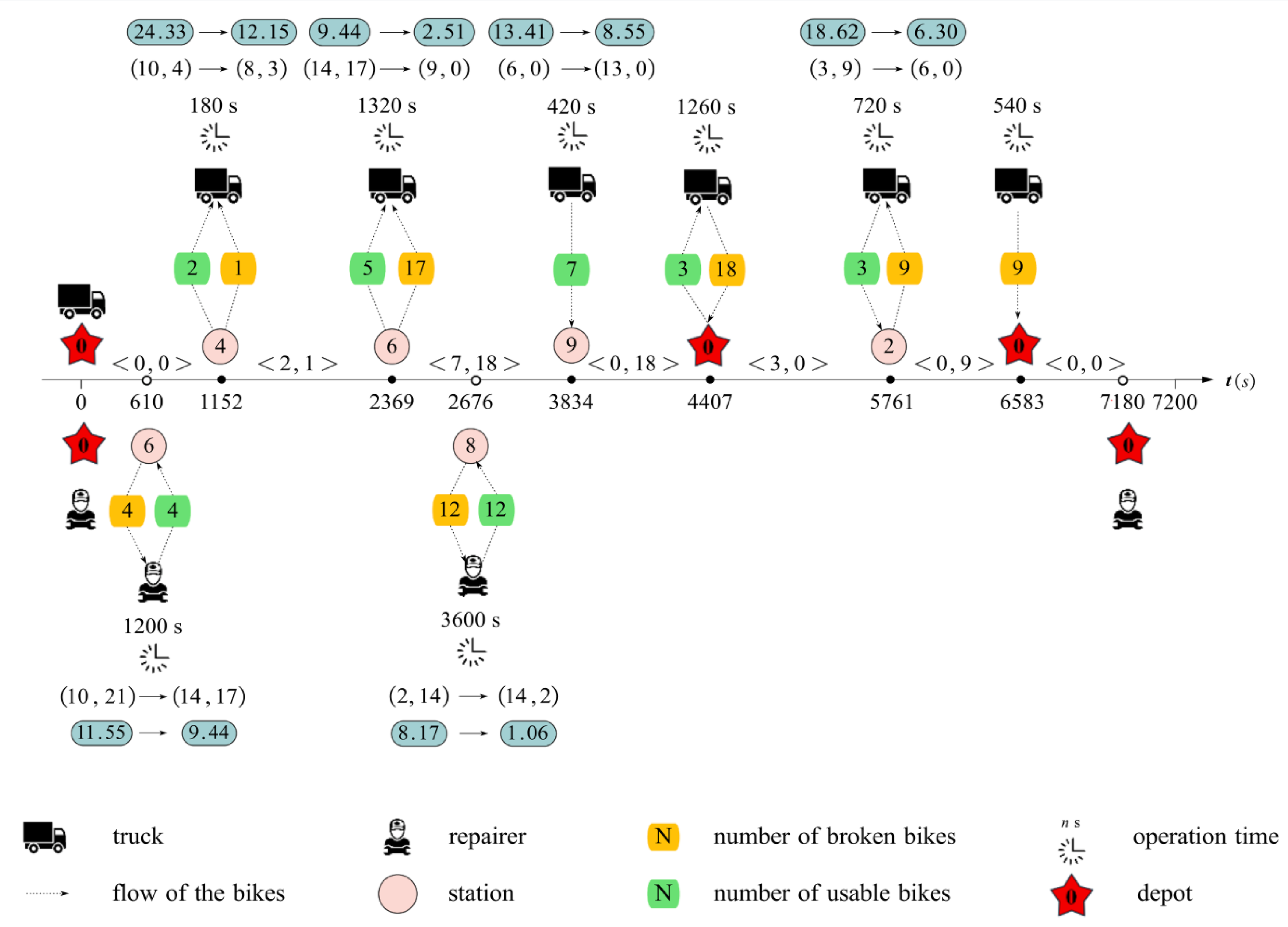


Fig. 3.2. The repositioning and repair process of Truck 1 and Repairer 1.

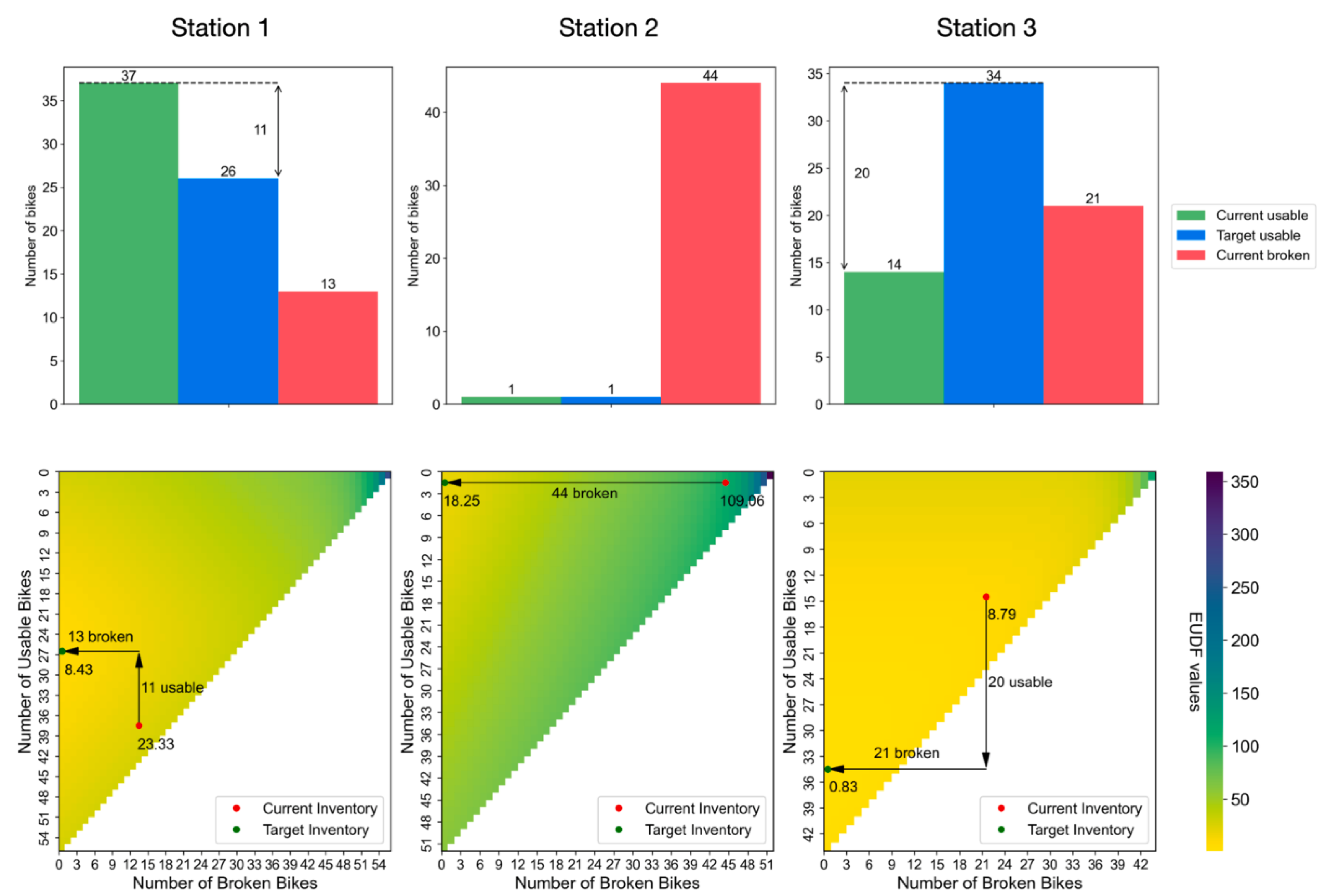
How it works: The model tracks bike inventory changes over time as trucks and repairers visit stations.

Key Innovation: Smart Time Allocation

The Problem: Spending too much time at early stations leaves no time for later ones.

Our Solution: Station Budget Constraint

- Each station gets a **time budget** based on its potential benefit
- Stations with more broken bikes get more time
- Unused time **redistributed** to later stations



$$BCRF_1^1 = \frac{23.33 - 8.43}{(11+13)\times 60} = 0.0103 \quad BCRF_2^1 = \frac{109.06 - 18.25}{44 \times 60} = 0.0344 \quad BCRF_3^1 = \frac{8.79 - 0.83}{(20+21)\times 60} = 0.0032$$

Prioritizing stations: Heatmaps show dissatisfaction levels. Darker colors = higher priority for service.

Result: Better service across all stations, not just the first few.

Results: Algorithm Performance

Comparison with Commercial Solver (Gurobi):

Table 5.4
A comparison between the results of Gurobi and HGSDAC-SBC on larger networks (Repositioning time budget $T = 2$ h, $\tau = 600$ s).

$\lvert S\rvert$	$\lvert K\rvert$	$\lvert R\rvert$	Gurobi			HGSDAC-SBC				[5]Gap (%)
			UB	LB	CPU (s)	[1]Obj. Avg.	[2]Obj. Best.	[3]Obj. Std.	[4]CPU (s)	
60	1	1	2604.63	2517.12	7200.00	2581.29	2579.82	0.86	6.37	0.90
	1	2	2533.44	2420.32	7200.00	2494.24	2486.32	4.09	9.20	1.55
	2	1	3581.80	2284.28	7200.00	2400.65	2379.21	10.18	9.87	32.98
	2	2	3517.71	2202.55	7200.00	2324.50	2302.98	11.76	10.90	33.92
90	1	1	4510.58	3893.04	7200.00	4038.28	4014.71	13.59	8.81	10.47
	1	2	4159.43	3782.32	7200.00	3941.78	3915.27	14.03	13.40	5.23
	2	1	4510.58	3656.81	7200.00	3862.44	3829.09	19.77	9.56	14.37
	2	2	4488.64	3557.92	7200.00	3768.58	3733.90	21.59	13.28	16.04
120	1	1	5113.72	4247.68	7200.00	4303.05	4293.75	3.58	9.13	15.85
	1	2	5103.87	4169.64	7200.00	4237.52	4226.39	4.17	14.96	16.97
	2	1	5113.72	4024.31	7200.00	4167.75	4129.41	16.19	11.45	18.50
	2	2	5103.87	3951.26	7200.00	4097.19	4071.74	11.87	15.98	19.72
200	1	1	8657.30	2919.70	7200.00	7821.12	7793.53	19.35	12.36	9.66
	1	2	8657.30	7563.69	7200.00	7719.58	7694.50	12.08	23.96	10.83
	2	1	8657.30	7378.11	7200.00	7641.82	7573.84	28.23	14.19	11.73
	2	2	8657.30	7286.86	7200.00	7561.16	7511.34	22.96	23.90	12.66
300	1	1	11717.13	10898.80	7200.00	11169.22	11134.10	15.16	16.55	4.68
	1	2	11716.99	10757.43	7200.00	11057.76	10990.90	19.38	25.67	5.63
	2	1	11717.13	10561.75	7200.00	10989.39	10953.90	19.84	19.59	6.21
	2	2	11716.99	10442.63	7200.00	10888.38	10848.40	20.63	33.70	7.07
400	1	1	15068.74	6026.88	7200.00	14280.67	14267.10	5.89	25.27	5.23
	1	2	15060.58	6026.88	7200.00	14178.63	14149.00	12.33	34.05	5.86
	2	1	15068.74	6026.59	7200.00	14169.14	14104.30	21.84	25.92	5.97
	2	2	15060.58	6026.59	7200.00	14059.18	14033.60	15.29	43.77	6.65
500	1	1	19793.68	7716.08	7200.00	18961.58	18927.40	18.77	27.36	4.20
	1	2	19785.07	7716.08	7200.00	18793.14	18734.00	22.68	41.60	5.01
	2	1	19793.68	7715.69	N/A	18752.12	18618.10	50.56	33.65	5.26
	2	2	19785.07	N/A	N/A	18612.62	18505.40	37.57	51.13	5.93

[1] the average objective value for each instance in 20 runs.
[2] the best objective value for each instance in 20 runs.
[3] the standard deviation of the objective value for each instance in 20 runs.
[4] average computational time for each instance in 20 runs in seconds.
[5] (UB – Obj. Avg) / UB.

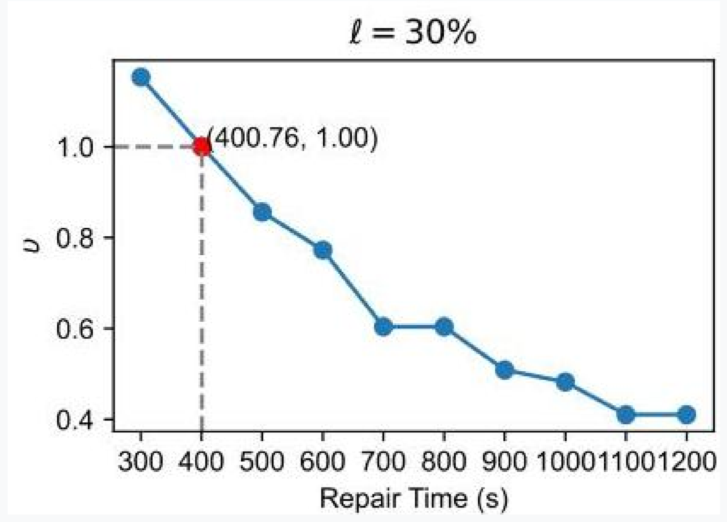
4–33%
Better solution quality
(lower user dissatisfaction)

6–51 sec
vs. 2 hours+
Computation time

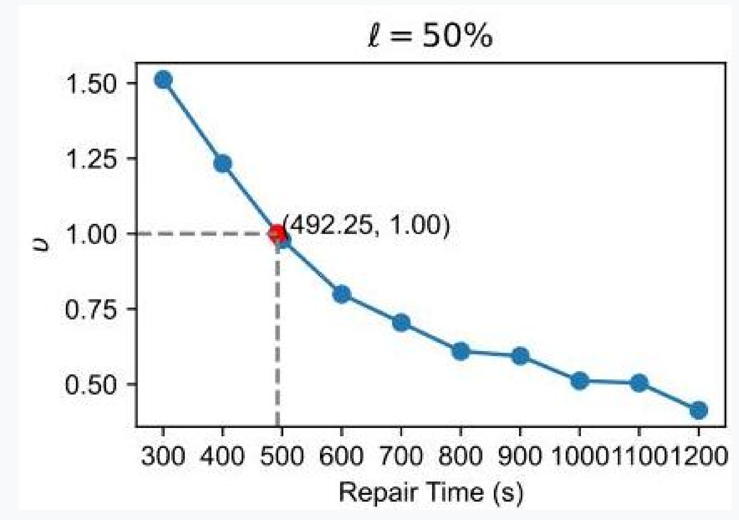
Scales to real cities: Tested on networks with up to **500 stations**
(Gurobi fails for networks larger than 200 stations)

Practical Takeaways for Operators

When should you deploy on-site repairers?



30% broken bikes



50% broken bikes

Key Decision Rules:

- **< 20% broken:** Trucks alone sufficient
- **> 30% broken:** On-site repairers cost-effective
- **Repair time > 11 min:** Never cost-effective

Bottom Line: Invest in preventive maintenance to keep repair times low.

Reference: Hu, R., Szeto, W.Y., & Ho, S.C. (2025). Repositioning in bike sharing systems with broken bikes considering on-site repairs. *Transportation Research Part E*, 104155.

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