

The New Era: Conservationism vs. Consumerism in the Bicycle World

How repair, reuse, and shared mobility could reshape the ride ahead

By Heather Mason, NBDA President

As we navigate continued climate disruption, economic uncertainty, and resource scarcity, one thing is clear: the way we move is evolving. At the center of this shift stands a symbol we know well—resilient, efficient, and full of promise—the bicycle.

Looking forward, both traditional bicycles and e-bikes are poised to play a defining role in the conversation between two opposing forces: **consumerism**, which pushes constant upgrades and disposability, and **conservationism**, rooted in longevity, stewardship, and shared value.

External Forces: How Tariffs Could Spark Innovation

Recent policy developments, including the potential reinstatement of tariffs on imported bicycles, e-bikes, and components, may accelerate this transformation. While intended to support domestic manufacturing, these tariffs could result in rising costs that impact retailers, suppliers, and consumers alike.

But within challenge lies opportunity. As pricing pressures grow, we expect the industry to adapt in creative, meaningful ways:

- Consumers will extend the life of the bikes they already own
- Retailers may build deeper service offerings and invest in repair infrastructure
- Refurbishment, circular economy models, and upcycled product lines will gain traction
- Leasing and rental programs will continue to grow as flexible, accessible alternatives

In this new landscape, reuse becomes not just a necessity—but a movement.

From Ownership to Stewardship

We are seeing a cultural shift—from buying to maintaining, from owning to stewarding. The value proposition of the bicycle is changing. More riders are embracing bikes as durable, reworkable assets.

This opens the door for education, skill-building, and community involvement. Shops that once focused solely on sales may become hubs for repair knowledge. Mechanics will be recognized as essential contributors to sustainability and innovation. In this space, every weld, patch, and tune-up tells a story.

Shared Mobility and the Rise of Access

Equally exciting is the growth of shared mobility programs. Whether it's bike shares in urban centers or e-bike rentals in tourism corridors, the future is about access. We're watching the idea of the bicycle expand—from personal property to shared community asset.

This opens new doors:

- Commuters may lease instead of purchase
- Tourists could rely on extended e-bike rentals
- Municipalities may invest in fleets for equitable transport access

Designing for Circularity

To support this future, product design must evolve. We anticipate a rise in modular, repairable, and recyclable components. Brands have a real opportunity to lead here—with take-back programs, lifetime service commitments, and platforms for second-life sales.

This isn't just the right thing to do—it's smart business. Riders increasingly expect sustainability to be standard, not optional.

A Cultural Reboot—Centered on Meaning

More than hardware, this shift is cultural. Progress will look different. Less about what's new—more about what lasts.

Imagine a world where local repair shops are gathering places, and a well-worn bike is a badge of care, not compromise. This is the opportunity ahead.

Conclusion: Moving Forward with Purpose

At the NBDA, we believe the next era of cycling will be defined not by how fast or far we go, but by how mindfully we move. This is a moment to lead—not just in products or services—but in values.

Every refurbished ride, every shared solution, and every commitment to circularity brings us closer to a future where cycling reflects not just freedom and fun—but purpose and progress.

Let's pedal toward what's possible—together.

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