

Urban Mushing: Great Exercise for You & Your Canine

By Mark Schuette

I'm a solar building designer by training; thus, I am always interested in energy and its conservation and production. I have a hobby of inventing sporting activity solutions for myself—all of which work, but I found that they were not very lucrative in sales.

I have also always been a dog lover. I made my first prototype of my "mushing dog behind the steering wheel" contraption after watching a young mother trying to push her baby stroller as her dog was wanting to go a different direction. I remember thinking how inefficient it all was. Just



then, I thought about how there should be a rig that would focus everyone's energy in the same direction. This thought was combined with observations over time on how we often want/have our dogs to pull us around on wheels in very dangerous ways. So I got on the internet to learn what was out there in terms of mushing rigs.

Of course all the different rigs out there have the dog/dogs out front pulling—and I knew that was not appropriate for the urban environment. I also had no interest in snow. I was on a very limited budget, and when I found the new sport of dog "scootering" which utilized the lowest cost scooter with larger wheels and a very low center of gravity—so it was safe—I felt I was onto something. So I bought a used kid's scooter for \$20 and had a metal fabricator make a curved bar to go over the dog since I instinctually knew that the dog had to be clipped into the bar on both sides of the body.



I wanted the dog to only be able to go forward, but I didn't want to get into dog training and I needed the dog to be under control in the city for his and my own good. There really was only one location to locate the dog that seemed obvious—at the side of the scooter. I didn't know if the scooter would be stable with a dog attached, so I put a wheel on the outside of the "outrigger bar." It worked on the first try, but after a few weeks I realized the wheel was up in the air half the time, and it was smoother and more fun to ride when I lifted it up. So I started to use the scooter without the wheel and found it to be a more elegant, lower-cost solution that was less spooky for the dog, put less stress on the scooter frame, provided a smoother ride, and was more of a sport since you can now lean the scooter and go on dirt!



I was lucky that things fell into place so quickly. I started selling them on the internet as soon as I could. Over the years, I fine-tuned the system and added more dogs. I also fitted the outrigger bar to a variety of other human powered rigs other than scooters. I now have about 12 dog-powered rigs conceptualized, and many of them are prototyped now. The scooter and "tadpole" trike are the most commercially viable at this point, with the scooter being the main and most-fun seller.

Over the years, I have thought about the benefits and opportunities that these rigs offer, and they are many. The one I hope to explore soon (which I never thought of at the initial prototype) is in the realm of "dog-powered mobility" for the disabled. A dog-powered wheelchair would be the culmination of the concept!

For anyone interested in learning more about these items, please contact Mark at markschuette@q.com or visit his website at www.dogpoweredscooter.com.