

07 Cycling and Public Transport

Key Principle

Integration between cycling and public transport offers many of the benefits of convenient door-to-door transport over longer distances that are associated with car use. For operators, encouraging cycling to public transport offers increased passenger catchment compared to walking (typically up to four times the catchment area for the same journey time to the stop), as well as the potential to increase passenger numbers without some of the land-take and parking management issues associated with car travel (over ten cycles can be parked in the space required for one car parking space).

In rural areas and some suburban locations, cycle access to stops or in-vehicle carriage may help to increase use and underpin public transport services that are struggling to make a commercial return, as well as offering a low-cost and socially inclusive form of access to cycling in the countryside.

As with all sustainable transport promotion, each point at which there is potential 'uncertainty', or risk, in the journey will deter users. This might be in the form of lack of signs to parking areas, lack of security, or uncertainty about the vehicles' capacity to convey cycles, the conditions of carriage, or booking arrangements.

It is important, therefore, that signs, vehicle layouts, leaflets and website materials produced by operators, passenger transport executives or local authorities make it easy and clear to users how to combine cycling and public transport.

Background

Transport operators and local authorities can take a variety of steps to integrate cycling and public transport. Local authorities and transport operators are increasingly recognising the benefits of providing secure cycle parking as part of a range of measures to encourage sustainable transport. Cycles attached to railings and other street furniture at stations are evidence that fare paying passengers are using this mode and that provision to accommodate parked cycles is required.

Bike and Ride

Bike and Ride is commonly used to describe the combination of cycling and rail combined in a single journey, but the 'rail travel' element could equally apply to tram, coach or bus services. The term covers a range of activities including:

- Cycling to the train station (or to a bus-based park and ride site), parking a cycle, and then taking the train (or bus) to the chosen destination.
- Cycling to the train station, taking your bike onboard the train, and then cycling to the destination.
- Cycling to the train station, park the bike in the station, taking the train, and then using a second bicycle to cycle to the chosen destination.

Where cycle parking is associated with public transport it involves cycles being parked regularly in the same place and left unattended for long periods. A good level of security is necessary to give users confidence that their bicycle will not be

stolen or vandalised. It is also important that cycle parking is under cover to provide protection from bad weather. The cycle parking area should be clearly signed, as some travellers will be unfamiliar with the interchange layout. Good signing will also help raise awareness about the potential for bike and ride. Operators and local authorities should make users aware that cycle parking facilities exist in general literature and website content, to encourage potential travellers to consider cycling.

The main options for commuter cycle parking at public transport interchanges are:

- *Covered Sheffield Stands (hoops)* - Sheffield stands can be perfectly adequate providing they are placed in a secure and covered location. This might be a cycle shelter in an area with lots of 'passive surveillance', for example close to the entrance, a taxi rank or park and ride bus stop. Stands may also be placed on a railway station concourse (or the nearest platform to the concourse) where space permits and may be covered by CCTV cameras if necessary. They should be sited in a convenient location so that passengers do not have to make a detour to park their bicycles.
- *Lockers* - Cycle lockers offer a higher level of protection for individual cycles and the option to also leave helmets and removable items such as lights on the bicycle. Lockers typically cost over five times as much per parking space as Sheffield stands and also require some management by the operator. Most lockers at transport interchanges are held by keyholders who register with the operator. Some designs enable operators to override the locks to open lockers in the event of a security alert.
- *Cycle Centres* - In addition to secure parking, cycle centres may provide a wide range of facilities including showers, lockers and changing facilities, cycle hire, cycle repairs and bike sales. The use of these facilities usually entails a small fee.
- *Store Rooms* – Some staffed stations, particularly in rural/suburban areas offer access to a locked store room with a key or access code available from the ticket office. This can sometimes help to make use of otherwise redundant space that is available in older station buildings where staff levels have reduced.
- *Automated / semi-automated secure access parking.* Some sites in the Netherlands and Japan offer automated parking systems where a cycle can be deposited into the system and then retrieved automatically using a unique access code that is generated when the cycle is dropped off. Stations such as Finsbury Park in London feature secure cycle parking that can be accessed using a smartcard such as the Oystercard used on London Transport, which then gives operators the option to levy a charge for using the parking facility.

Bike Carriage on trains

CTC president Jon Snow has stated that "*Cycling and rail are perfect partners. The combination provides a 'doorstep-to-destination' option for longer-distance journeys which might otherwise be possible only by car*"

Cycle carriage is available to some extent on most mainline rail services. Folding cycles can be taken on virtually all heavy and light rail services, although some operators insist on their being bagged. In general there is capacity for at least four non-folding cycles on most long distance inter-city services while on regional railways most trains can carry one or two non-folding cycles. Individual train operating companies have different regulations about the requirements to pre-book a space and some, particularly local commuter services into London, do not convey cycles during the peak travel times. Further information is summarised in an annual [Cycling by Train](#) guide available from the National Rail website. Some very busy services such as the Gatwick Express manage to offer unrestricted access to cycle carriage at all times and offer a model for other operators.

At present there is no standard approach to reserving spaces, few operators offer the capability to book cycles on-line at the same time as purchasing tickets and making seat reservations and there is variation in whether a fee is payable or not. There is a huge potential for operators to simplify and improve booking procedures for cyclists, and it would be beneficial to establish a default position where all operators enable cyclists to 'walk-on' to services if space is available. On many services cyclists are turned away unless they have a pre-reserved space even if there is room available on the train.

Some operators already offer combined train ticket and cycle hire packages such as the 'Off the Rails' package offered by Northern Rail, which can help to contribute to sustainable tourism strategies as well as offering 'added value' to the services offered by the rail company and tourism providers. Other operators presently offer the option to book taxi or bus travel to the station as part of the ticket price, extending a similar initiative to offer bike hire at the destination could be one way to enable cycling, for example by people who need to occasionally travel to a city at peak times for business meetings but not frequently enough to justify investment in a folding cycle.

The key important factors for successful bike and rail integration are:

- Convenient and secure cycle parking (operators can involve user groups and Police crime prevention officers to agree on secure sites and other measures to enhance security);
- Easy access to information about cycle carriage and booking arrangements;
- Information available (prior to travel) about cycle-parking facilities at stations;
- Simple regulations about any peak-hour restrictions on cycle-carriage;
- Presumption that cyclists can 'walk-on' to a service and will only be refused access by train staff if cycle spaces are already occupied / pre-booked;
- Clearly marked, easy to use space within trains including some 'flexible space' that is also useful for pushchairs and bulky luggage;
- Options for group travel, particularly on off-peak services, by using tip-up seats or other flexible space to enable more cycles to be carried;

- Additional services such as cycle hire, managed cycle parking, combined tickets; discounts with partner organisations (see case studies);
- Operators to host a regular 'cycle forum' to enable cycle-rail users to suggest ideas for improvements.

Cycling England is working with the Department for Transport and the rail industry to try to foster improved opportunities for Bike and Rail integration, particularly to simplify, maintain and enhance the options to take bikes on rail services. Some of these opportunities arise during re-franchising or renewal or refurbishment of rolling stock. It is important that they are fully exploited as the impacts of failure to cater for cyclists in franchise agreements and new designs can endure for the lifetime of the franchise or rolling stock.

The National Cycle-Rail awards recognise and reward good practice each year (see [recent winners](#))

Bike Carriage on Bus and Coach Services

Many long distance coach services and some local bus services are able to convey cycles. A few services transport bikes within the vehicle in a 'flexible' space. More commonly cycles are placed in the boot or under-floor storage area of coaches or on a purpose-built trailer. Some bus services, particularly in rural areas, offer rear mounted cycle racks that carry two or three cycles. Folding cycles may also be taken on bus and coach services at the discretion of the driver. Of all of these options, easily accessible space within the bus is probably the most attractive to cyclists, although where the primary purpose of the bus service is to provide access to mountain biking areas, external carriers may be more appropriate.

The best central source of information is the CTC which produces a regularly updated leaflet detailing which services convey cycles and whether there is a requirement for them to be placed in bags. While the requirement to place cycles in bags is reasonable for longer distance coach services where other luggage is placed in the same area, for shorter distance services where only cycles are conveyed in a storage area there should be no requirement for bags.

Some of the cycle racks on buses have been funded through central government projects to encourage innovative public transport schemes. While it is difficult to make direct comparisons with abroad, 25% of buses in the USA carry front-mounted cycle racks and there is clearly potential for increased bike-bus access within the UK. Front-mounted cycle racks are not permitted within Europe due to safety legislation but are preferred in the USA as they are visible, secure and easy to load and unload. The concept was first introduced as a means to enable cyclists to get across a major river bridge in Seattle, and there may be UK examples of physical barriers such as the Blackwall Tunnel in London, the Forth bridge or even long or steep hills where cyclists might benefit from an easy-access short-hop bus ride.

Cycle parking at bus stops

In rural areas, where a significant proportion of people may live more than a mile from the nearest bus stop, it may be appropriate to provide parking for cycles at bus stops. This might be particularly useful at stops on main bus corridors with good service frequencies. Cycle parking at bus stops could simply be one or two Sheffield stands, but ideally there should be some form of shelter, as in the photograph below.



Cycle parking incorporated into the shelter at a rural bus stop in Langenlois, Austria

Bikes on Ferries

Although ferries are relatively rare in the UK they tend to be used by cyclists because the alternatives can mean a lengthy detour, an uncomfortable or hazardous tunnel, an exposed high level bridge or a limited rail service. Cycles are conveyed free on the Mersey ferries between Liverpool and the Wirral and many cycles can be observed at commuter times. In Portsmouth the ferry to Gosport is also well used by cyclists.

Case Studies

Northern Rail Cycling Strategy

Northern Rail developed a cycling strategy to encourage bike-rail integration. The strategy was developed in consultation with user groups through the Northern Rail Cycle Forum. It is a pragmatic strategy recognising the constraints of the current supply of rolling stock in terms of bicycle carriage, but also recommending a flexible approach to provision at off-peak times, and importantly, the front line staff working on the trains have been briefed to take this approach. The strategy seeks to positively address cycling issues and identify opportunities to work in partnership with local authorities, passenger transport executives and other stakeholders. The strategy includes safer routes to stations, Eco-stations where a raft of measures is being introduced to make them more environmentally friendly, local cycle route maps at stations, improvements to cycle parking and security, better information and measures to promote and support cycle tourism. The strategy can be found on the [Cycling England web site](#).

Merseytravel

Free bike travel is available on all trains operated by Merseyrail throughout the Merseyside PTE area, at all times of day. Cycle carriage in flexible space on trains was first introduced in 1993. It is now one of the standards of service as specified under the franchise agreement for Merseyrail. Before unrestricted bike carriage was brought in, there were fears about conflict with other passengers, but in practice there have not been problems and many cyclists avoid taking their bikes on the train during the rush hour. Merseytravel also offer free access for bicycles on the Mersey ferries and these are a popular way for commuter cyclists to cross the river at peak hours. A booklet of cycle rides starting and finishing at local stations is also available.

Travel South Yorkshire

Travel South Yorkshire publishes a [guide to taking cycles on public transport](#) in the region. The guide includes details of the amount, type and location of cycle parking facilities at interchanges as well as listing bus and rail services that convey cycles. A nominal fare of 20p is charged for carrying non-folding bikes on bus services.

Further Information

[Cycling Policy: An Overview](#)

The DfT document, published in June 2007, outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different cycling organisations within the UK. The document has a specific section relating to the frequently asked questions regarding the carriage of bikes on buses and trains.

[CTC website](#)

The CTC website includes information about cycling and public transport policies and links to information about cycle carriage on trains, buses and coaches.