

Bikes on public transport: how is it organised elsewhere?

Transport of bikes on trains

The policies for transport of bikes on trains regarding carriage, time-restrictions, booking requirements, charging etc. vary.

In Sydney, bikes can be carried at all times, are free at off-peak, and cost a child fare at peak times. A similar situation applies in Adelaide. In Perth and Brisbane, bikes cannot be carried at peak times, but at other times carriage is free.

In Los Angeles, bikes are allowed (but only 2 per car, and not if the car is crowded).

In Vancouver, bikes are not allowed on peak trains, and there is a maximum of 2 bikes per car.

In San Francisco/Oakland (BART), bikes are allowed on most trains, but are not allowed on crowded cars. Cyclists must also yield to all other passengers and yield priority seating to seniors and persons with disabilities.

On London Overground services, cycles are carried free but are not able to be carried on certain peak services. Docklands light rail only takes folding bikes that are completely enclosed in a container.

Cycle carriage has to be seen in combination with other bike related measures and the way the public transport system is organised. For example, in the Netherlands, bikes are not allowed on peak trains, but almost every station has excellent bike storage capacity, often guarded and with a bike service station. As an effect, a lot of commuters have two bikes which they leave either at their departure or arrival station.

Public transport systems that allow bikes on trains often use modern trains which are well-equipped for safe bike transport:



Bike transport in a French train (SNCF homepage)

Transport of bikes on buses

Transporting bikes inside buses is common in a lot of European cities. The rules differ per city - in some cities bikes are only allowed off-peak, in others during the whole day, always at the discretion of the driver, which is mainly based on the availability of space. There are also public transport systems that allow only the transport of folding bikes on buses, or no bikes at all.

The costs differ as well, from free transport to an adult fare and anything in between.

European buses are often well suited for bike transport, as they are often super low floor and have a wide, usually double back door with a dedicated area for prams, wheelchairs and bikes opposite of the door. This enables quick and safe entering and leaving of the bus.

A second option for transporting bikes on buses is using a bus bike rack, mounted at the front of the bus. Bus bike racks are commonly used in the USA, where approximately one third of all urban buses are equipped with a rack.

In the last decade Australia has also begun to introduce bike racks, for example in Brisbane (where buses with bike racks operate on three routes) and Canberra where all buses now have bike racks). Travel is free.

Experiences within existing systems are very positive:

- The systems are safe and easy to use (loading time is approximately 8 seconds, which does not significantly impact bus schedules)
- Feedback has shown that the service is very popular
- The service expands the catchment area of a bus stop by ca. 10-fold
- Bike racks address the vulnerability of people walking to and from bus stops especially at night and offer a 'safety net' for cyclists with mechanical problems, illness, bad weather etc.
- The service attracts new users (research in Colorado showed 50% of users were new to transit, and 27% would have been single occupant vehicle drivers otherwise), with all positive effects like reduced congestion, less emissions etc.
- The costs of the bike racks are relatively low, ca. \$2,000 – \$2,500 per bus for a two cycle unit.

Some risks are mentioned in the literature:

- One issue in Canberra is the lack of reliability. If not all buses are equipped or the demand is much higher than the supply (two bikes per rack, first-come, first-served) the system can become to unreliable, especially for commuters. This obviously also depends on the frequency of the services

- Other systems experienced users who forget to collect their bikes when they got off the bus.



Bike rack (Sportworks homepage)



Canberra Bus (ACTION website)



Christchurch buses (Environment Canterbury website)