

Lessons learned from the knowledge exchange workshop and site visit in Liverpool

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Contents:

Lessons learned from the BiTiBi knowledge exchange workshop and study tour on March 16-17, 2015 in Liverpool (UK), easy-to-read, relevant report.

Target group:

Public version for rail and bike operators and other stakeholders (local and regional authorities, mobility consultancies).

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1 IMPRESSIONS OF CYCLING IN LIVERPOOL

1.1 General Observations

1.1.1 Very few cyclists

Although cycling in Britain is on the up, changing the way we think about cycling will stimulate people to choose the bike. Cycling has to be marketed differently and not only as sport and recreation. Urban cycling should be promoted. Previous cycling advocacy had a strong focus on sports cycling and didn't engage with 'normal' cyclists. The goal of British Cycling is to achieve this mindset by doing a lot of small things / pilots - instead of merely talking. They are looking a lot at The Netherlands and Copenhagen as an example.



Figure 1: The modal split of commuters (source: UK Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2001)

The modal share for bikes in the Liverpool area (450,000 inhabitants) is about 2%.

1.1.2 Quality of bikes

The British mostly use racing bikes, mountain bikes or folding bikes. Traditional "Dutch" bikes are rarely seen.

1.1.3 Quality of life as promotion for cycling

In the UK, the share of car and walking as a mode of transport to and from the station is high. People who live 1-2 miles from the station could, theoretically, use a bicycle, but due to a lack of infrastructure and tradition, people use a car instead.

'Making cities liveable' is the way to connect with authorities to promote cycling. Focus on children for bicycle promotion. The younger you start, the better. The policy of the national government is slowly changing and they have made cycling and walking more important by adding the obligation (via funding) to place focus on cycling and walking in infrastructure projects.

1.1.4 Cycling behaviour

The people who cycle in Liverpool can basically be divided into two groups; either very aggressive (acting like a car, riding on the main road) or very 'scared' (riding on sidewalks at a slow pace).

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There is very little separated infrastructure specifically designed for cyclists, which of course impacts the safety of cyclists negatively. Cycle lanes are rare but also the traffic lights are completely focused on cars. In places, it can take up to 5 minutes to cross a single intersection as a pedestrian or cyclist - if you want to cross it legally.

Later in this report there are more details on cycle infrastructure.

1.2 Bike sharing (Bike&Go)

1.2.1 How the system works

Bike&Go, modeled on the Dutch OV-fiets system, is a bike sharing scheme available at about 100 railway stations in the UK on the networks of Merseyrail, Northern Rail and Abellio Greater Anglia. There are nearly 1000 Bike&Go subscribers nationwide.

After subscribing, a Bike&Go bike can be rented at any station with Bike&Go facilities by going to the ticket office of the station, from where you get the key on a fob that displays the number of the bike. With the key fob, the bike shelter can be accessed and you have to search for the bike that corresponds with the number on the key fob. If the door of the shelter closes while you are inside the shelter, you can reopen the door by locking the bike and re-open the door by swiping the key fob at the sensor next to the door. The same procedure applies when returning the bike and finally you return the key at the ticket office. The need to lock the bike to open the door is not very convenient.





Staff

The station service agent should be given more experience in renting the bikes in order to make the process more efficient and speedy. Some staff didn't know how to rent a bike. Especially the older staff were hesitant to help if they were not used to renting a bike. Our experience showed, however, how important the staff are in helping you out. The times the rental didn't work fluently,



the friendly staff were very willing to help keep the experience a positive one. Training of staff is continuous, but learning by doing works best.





Photo above: it was sometimes difficult to get the bike out of the upper-racks because of the quality of the racks.

1.2.2 Shelters for Bike&Go



Photo above: One of the free shelters at Liverpool South Parkway station. With your key fob the shelter can be opened via an automatic sliding door which closes after 30 seconds or 1 minute, depending on location.





Photos above: A Bike&Go shed in the middle of the station hall of Liverpool South Parkway station (left). The Bike&Go bikes were placed in the station hall only for the workshop participants (right). Normally they are located in the shelter.



Photo above: Safe and free bicycle parking with 10 Bike&Go bicycles at Southport station.

Maintenance

Open shelters create problems with pigeons and dirt. Merseyrail is working on an idea to provide wipes to customers to clean the bike before use. General maintenance is done three times a year, but it is not enough for general cleaning. Thinking of an option like having students that can clean the bikes more often is worth considering. This problem may solve itself when the bikes are used more often.





Better design

The reason for the shelter being a simple green cage instead of a transparent, nicely-designed structure is that there is an ad hoc and constrained system of funding. For example, there was funding for placement of 20 shelters in one year. Besides that there is not a well-developed supplier market in the UK, they end up with the same suppliers they always have worked with. On the other hand, there have never been complaints about the fact that it is a cage. The funding makes it difficult to have a structural way of spending money on shelters. Together with the municipality, the rail operator decides where the shelter will be placed.



Photo above: A free to use shelter, for Bike&Go and cycle storage.

1.2.3 Location

Bike&Go bicycles are sometimes placed inside the station, which can be convenient. In some situations it takes time to get the key and then walk to the location where the bicycles are placed. Often, the route is not very straightforward.

The Bike&Go shelters that are placed at the end of platforms are the least convenient. It requires walking over the platform, which is sometimes located far away from the ticket office where you pick up the key. If it is raining, you often find yourself exposed. In some cases it seemed that there was enough room on the platform to place the shelter closer to the ticket office. It is illogical not to have put them there.

Some bike racks are placed on a platform, which is inconvenient if you need to catch a train on another platform and have to take the stairs or elevator through a crowded station.



1.2.4 Marketing





The marketing is very good. The information is clear, the signs look good and the campaign is one of the best the partners have seen so far. Penetration of the campaign is also good. The wayfinding to the shelters and Bike&Go locations leaves room for improvement. It becomes more and more important that signage helps show where the bikes are located. Especially for new locations.

Marketing should be more focused on the right people in order to make it work. Maybe more focus on infrequent visitors could work. MR is checking if immediate hire for leisure is feasible. At the moment it takes two weeks between registering and actually renting a bike.

An identifiable look and feel of the shelters could help support the image of cycling as cool.

1.3 Cycle parking

1.3.1 General observations

Most stations are equipped with both guarded and unguarded bicycle facilities. Compared to the rest of the UK that is rather unusual.

Cycling is slightly more relevant for the customers of Mersey Rail. Of their 66 stations, 50 of them will have facilities (in a 120 km network). 6% of the customers (around 3500 people) have a subscription for using the cycle shelters.

Lessons learned from workshop and site visit LVP – March 2015 bitibi.eu fb/biketrainbike @biketrainbike



1.3.2 Quality of bike racks

The space between the bicycle racks is too narrow, especially for the Go Bikes. The handlebars and cables get tangled.

The cost for one cycle rack in a shelter is, on average, around £1000, including materials, production and implementation.

1.3.3 Unguarded cycle parking at railway stations



Photo above: Bike racks next to the station entrance of St. Michaels station between Liverpool and Liverpool South Parkway. Racks right in front of the station: they had to be placed on "railway ground", locations that are property of Merseyrail. In some cases they were located on the lower platforms - not always the best place.



Photos above: Bicycle shed and racks at the end of a bicycle lane at Liverpool South Parkway. As you can see, the shed and racks are blocking the cycle lane partially, but as it is no through route it is not really a problem.

1.3.4 GoCycle secure bike storage

Locations are sometimes difficult to find, possibly due to the limitation of building on 'railway ground'.







Photo above: A station area map: so you can easily find the bicycle and other facilities.



Photo above: The safe and free shelter at Southport. Combined Bike&Go and secure cycle storage.



Photo above: A bicycle shed in St. Michaels station, especially adapted for this preserved area and free to use. Combined Bike&Go and secure cycle storage.



1.4 Taking bikes on the train

It is free and, apparently, required by law for rail operators to keep it that way.

One or two people with bikes were spotted on almost every train. This is, in a way, competition for Bike&Go and has to be taken seriously in the further development of Bike&Go.



1.5 Infrastructure and routes

The infrastructure shown in paragraph 1.5.1 shows approximately all infrastructure regarding cyclists. Separated lanes were only found in Southport along the coastline (tourism) and the cycle track from Liverpool South Parkway into the direction of Liverpool Airport. Cyclists are forced to share the roads with motorised traffic most of the time.

1.5.1 Infrastructure design

In the center of Liverpool there are few cycle lanes. In Southport, cyclists should use the bus lanes.



Photo above: A combined bus-taxi-bicycle lane in Southport. Not always a good idea.







Photos above: Also in Southport: a pole next to the cycle track (left) and the cyclists need to divert to the footpath (right).



Photo above: Combined lanes for pedestrians and cyclists, like here in Southport, are space-efficient but not always the safest and most comfortable solution for cyclists and pedestrians alike.

1.5.2 Railway station surroundings

It is very important to help people feel safe when cycling. Therefore, infrastructure should be designed accordingly. In the city centre of Liverpool, cycling doesn't 'feel' at all safe. A network of safe cycle routes is strongly recommended. Like in Paris, they can be combined with bus lanes, but proper separate cycle tracks are preferred.

Provide cycle routes to the station that are quicker, more comfortable, signposted, safer and more visible - especially on the two mile route between the pilot station of Liverpool South Parkway and the old airport. Make it clear to cyclists that the route is not only useful for reaching the old airport but also useful to reach other relevant destinations.

Cyclists should have greater priority: it's unfortunate that cyclists have to give way to vehicular traffic emerging from driveways and have to act as pedestrians to cross a junction. For example, if one wants to turn right, they have to wait at between four and six traffic lights. It is better if the situation was similar to the Netherlands and Denmark, where the maximum number of times you have to wait at a crossing is twice but often just once.

Increase "legibility" of the surroundings, that is, where to cycle, where to walk, where to drive.

Regarding accessibility to the railway station, importance should be given primarily to pedestrians, then cyclists, then public transport and finally cars.



1.5.3 Signposting

Almost no signage of cycle routes. Only routes for sightseeing/tourism are signposted, as visible in the photo below. In Southport, cyclists have to use signage for pedestrians in order to find the station.



1.5.4 Traffic lights

For cyclists, traffic lights are annoying. Cyclists have to act like a pedestrian and use the pelican crossing at most traffic lights. See paragraph 1.5.6 about traffic lights.

1.5.5 Traffic signs and marking of cycle lanes

Visibility of cycle tracks is both important for safety and promoting cycling.

In the Netherlands, a traffic sign featuring a bike is required for cycle paths. Red asphalt and a bicycle pictogram are also used. Motorists are fined if they park in a cycle lane.

Traffic lights with specific signals and small traffic lights placed lower for visibility reasons as well as specific green phases for cyclists are not officially recognized in British law. There is, however, a pilot in London at Bow Roundabout where these lights and phases are implemented. Please see the photo below:







1.5.6 Route from Liverpool South Parkway (LSP) towards the airport

This route is typical for the situation elsewhere in Liverpool. At essential spots on the route, no cycling infrastructure is available. Also the 'right of way' rules are in favour of motorized traffic at driveways, which stops the continuity of the cycle track.



Photos above: The bicycle lane ends after 100 metres (left) and then merges with motorized traffic (right). In the opposite direction the easiest way is to use the pavement – and to avoid the pedestrians.





Photos above: After the crossing and Horrocks Avenue, the bicycle lane re-emerges again along Speke Road. Unfortunately some obstacles like poles (left) or bus shelters (right) stand in the middle of the lane.





Photos above: The crossing between Speke Road and Bank's Road is another obstacle (left). On the way back from the airport you have to wait at least five times at pelican crossings, because cyclists are not given priority and must act like pedestrians. The photo on the right shows lights 1, 2 and 3.





Photos above: Pelican crossing number 2 (left) and number 4 (right)



Photos above: Pelican crossing number four (left) and five (right).



Photos above: Along Speke Road cyclists need to give way (or even dismount, according to the traffic sign) at every road or driveway. That gives a rather uncomfortable ride.



1.6 Cycle Rail Toolkit

1.6.1 Cycle rail toolkit



ATOC, the Association of Train Operating Companies, has developed a cycle rail toolkit. It provides relevant information for railway companies to know how to focus on promoting cycling to and from railway stations. Examples are shown below:

Asked whether there was an alternative mode of transport they would like to use to travel to and from the station:

- 30.2% of passengers said they had an alternative means to get to the station
- 33.2% indicated there was an alternative to make their onward trip
- 9.8% said they would like to cycle to the station
- 11.2% felt they would like to cycle from the station

National Station Improvement Programme - Final Report Passenger Focus 2010



Over 50 per cent of the cycle market is comprised of individuals living in postcodes categorised as "urban living" and "suburban lifestyles". People in these segments tend to be well educated, reasonably well off and tend to cycle for leisure as well as for commuting to work

Central London Rail Termini Report, TfL





Wheeling ramps should not obstruct convenient access to the handrail nor be located in the centre of the steps where they might form a trip hazard. Locating the wheeling ramp close to the wall minimises the trip hazard for pedestrians, but this reduces convenience for cyclists as the bicycle needs to be supported at more of an angle. This is made more difficult if pannier bags are fitted. Ideally for cyclists, the distance between the ramp and the wall should be enough to ensure that the pedals and handlebars do not clash while the bike is being held reasonably vertically, but the actual position will depend on site-specific conditions such as the width of the stairs, the handrail arrangement, and the amount of pedestrian flow.

Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 2/08 DfT 2008

And it has a clear checklist what to do to improve the access to the station :

Routes to stations

- Are there strategic cycle routes from and to key destinations (employment centres as well as residential areas) within 5km?
- Are routes to the station from and to key destinations consistently signed?
- Is the potential for providing new routes and greater permeability being explored?
 Have barriers to cycling been identified and an action plan developed to
- remove them? <u>
 — Is information on cycling to</u> and from the station adequate and easily found?
- Is cycling to the station actively promoted by TOCs and stakeholders, especially the local authority?

Access to the station

- Are cyclists able to gain access (and leave) in all directions?
- What measures, including cycle parking, are provided outside of the station can they be improved?
- Are there any measures that could be introduced to facilitate cyclists' use of access roads e.g. cycle lanes, tracks, contra-flow cycling, flush dropped kerbs etc?
 Can a which side tight up to the attrice antropool?
- Can cyclists nde nght up to the station enhance?
 Where cycle parking is sited outside of the station building is it on the direct line of a cyclist's approach? (You may need to consider NRSP - see Appendix B)
- Is access to the station building convenient for cyclists e.g. where doors are provided are they automatically opened by motion detection?

Within the station

- Can cyclists keep their cycles with them whilst buying tickets or seeking information?
- What facilities, including cycle parking, are provided for cyclists can they be improved?
- Is cycle parking visible, conveniently sited, signed and served by step-free direct routes?
- If steps are encountered, are wheeling channels or lifts provided?¹
- At the gate line, can cyclists gain convenient access to platforms?
 When leaving the station are major destinations signed/suitable route mapping provided?
- Is there a procedure for Cycle-Rail passengers to give feedback on their experience?
- Is there a process for consultation with stakeholders before plans go further?
 Have potential station security considerations been taken into account and advice sought (see Appendix B)?

Notes:

a ATOC holds detailed best practice developed by cycling campaign groups on this issue
2 User-based insight into what works and what does not, has the potential to turn a minor improvement into a considerable success. However, it is important to keep the discussion focussed on planned improvements.

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You can download the document at <u>http://www.atoc.org/download/clientfiles/files/ATOC-Toolkit-low-res-single.pdf</u>

1.7 Suggestions for improvement

Safety

• At busy, narrow and dangerous spots along the route it is mostly difficult to apply a cycle lane, but especially at those spots it is important or even essential to create safe cycle infrastructure.

Bike&Go

- Parking: it is quite heavy to store the bike on top racks. Policy is that bikes are parked in the lower racks. Staff has to provide keys for the lower racks. Upper racks are only for storage. Make sure this policy is followed in practice.
- Bike&Go has some challenges to face before it contributes completely to a seamless journey' with the combination of train and bicycle. There are several reasons for that:
 - The station manager isn't completely experienced with using the Bike&Go system. Also there are sometimes technical difficulties with the handsets.
 - The station service location (where the keys are located) and the Bike&Go bikes are not always close to each other.
 - The location of both cycle storage and Bike&Go is not always intuitive and/or visible. Placement on the platform might also be inconvenient when passing through a crowded station.
 - The ticket office for retrieving the key and the location where the Bike&Go bicycles are placed are sometimes far apart. Therefore a significant amount of time is lost picking up or returning the bicycle.
 - The key fob is needed to open the shelter from the inside. For that you need to lock your bicycle. This would be easier if the shelter can be opened from inside with a simple button.
 - Store the cycles always on the lower level of the racks to make it easier and quicker to take them out.

Cycle parking

- Go Cycle secure storage: install a button to open the storage from the inside without having to use a key.
- Add more secure bike parking (at Southport and at some other bigger stations) and promote the free safe bike parking to increase their use.