



bike  
train  
bike

**Lessons Learned**  
**Project Meeting in Milan (Como/Bollate, Italy)**  
*on March 17/18, 2016*

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\*Building Block

## Como Borghi

### BB1. BIKE PARKING

• A secured and covered bicycle storage ('Velostazione') next to the station hosting up to 90 bicycles (with room for more racks if needed) opened in September 2015 (pictures n°1 & 2). Although the station is quite small with only one platform, **the functional design and location of the parking facility is important for its success since it makes the facility easy and pleasant to use**. This is not often the case on smaller stations elsewhere.

• The location of the bike parking is excellent. Coming from the square in front of the station, cyclists get **a direct and easy access to the parking. There is also direct access to the platform enabling fast transfer times between bike and train** (n°3). The distinct industrial look makes the parking recognisable and a sign outside guide people to its entrances. An area of improvement is to make the parking more visible from the square in front of the station, possibly using a bike logo and writing on the wall, similar to the writing at the platform-side of the parking.

• It is free to park your bike in the clean and light facility but customers must **access the Velostazione with a card**. After registration on the train operator's website, the card is sent to a home address. The card allows the customer to access two bike parking facilities of choice on the train network. Further security is added with the help of security cameras.

• Facilities inside are well-thought of. There is a small **repair area** ('Ciclo Officina') with self-service repair tools and water available. Soon, automatic **lockers** will be available and will be opened with an extra sticker with chip on access cards. Pricing for the use of the lockers is not yet decided. The **two-tier racks** on one side of the parking may be difficult to operate, especially with heavy bikes.

• There is also limited but well-organised **outdoor cycle parking space**. The construction of the Velostazione included reorganisation of the outdoor cycle parking and car parking (only 3 car parking places were cancelled in favour of the construction of the Velostazione).



## BB2. PUBLIC BIKE

- The 'Bike&CO' bike share system has 16 locations across Como. The system is for tourists and residents alike and **a rental location is available directly in front of the Como Borghi station** (n°4). The system is part of the 'Bicincittá' bike share system that can be found in numerous (smaller) Italian cities.

- **The functional bikes** (n°5) **provide a comfortable, smooth ride**. This is mainly because the bikes weigh significantly less than the bikes that are used for bike sharing systems elsewhere.

- A subscription to use the system can be bought on the web site, through the app or at the main station in Como. The bikes are being used by residents in combination with train journeys. **Docking stations are located at Como Borghi, Lago and San Giovanni railway stations.** To stimulate people to use the bikes for single journeys a small fee has to be paid after 30 mins. of use. Tourists pay more but do not have to dock the bike within half an hour.



## BB3. UNITY OF BIKE-TRAIN ORGANISATIONS

- There seems to be more attention for bike policy and the BiTiBi approach within infrastructure manager Ferrovie Nord. **Ferrovie Nord has committed itself to investments in bike parkings throughout their network**, even though this is outside of their traditional core business. They cooperate with local governments and bike organisations and offer space in their railway stations.

## BB4. INTEGRATED PAYMENT SYSTEM

- **The regional public transport smart travel cards** ('Itinero' and 'Ioviaggio') can be enabled to provide access to the bike parkings (including the Velostazione at Como Borghi station). It makes the combined bike-train journey more convenient.

- The subscriptions for the public bike share scheme in Como can be bought through an app for your smartphone. Otherwise, a separate card is required which can be bought online or at the main train station of Como. There is no integration with the regional public transport card, but this would be an important aspect to improve the program. There are different pricing options, catering both for tourists (8 Euro including 4 hours of use within 24 hours) and residents (weekly, monthly and yearly passes ranging from 5-35 Euro).

## BB5. COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- The opening of the bike parking at Como Borghi station has been given attention in the local media. A **promotional campaign** was launched to draw attention to the new Velostazione using **posters in several train stations and by issuing merchandise**. Moreover, training sessions are being organised at the Velostazione in bike repair.



## BB.6 UNDERSTANDING OF INFRA SITUATION

• In general, despite the poor road conditions, Como has a quite good environment for cyclists: **the city is built at human scale, is lively at most locations and the public spaces are of high quality**. It is notable that the hilly surroundings of Como make it difficult to reach the railway stations by bicycle that are further away.

• The historic city centre is best suited for cyclists. **The old town is pedestrianized with almost no motorized traffic** (n°6). It is, however, pretty tricky to navigate between pedestrians walking down the narrow (shopping) streets, especially on busy days.

• **Cycling outside the city centre is less safe and therefore less attractive**. Roads are designed with

cars in mind and have very limited cycling infrastructure. Barriers for easy cycling around town include randomly parked cars on the side of the road and one way roads (sometimes two lanes wide), where cyclists can ride in one direction only, just as car traffic. Cycling infrastructure is most necessary on busy boulevards because of high speed motor traffic. On the contrary, in residential streets, cycle tracks are not essential due to low speeds of motor traffic.

• There is one important cycle track (combined with pedestrians) along the lake (n°7) that offers nice cycling possibilities. Other routes are being developed. Dedicated signage seems to be lacking. At least the routes from the train station(s) to the city centre and lakeside cycle tracks should be signposted.



## Bollate Centro and Bollate Nord

### BB1. BIKE PARKING

- The first bike parking in Bollate ('Velostazione') opened in September 2012 (n°8) inside Bollate Centro station (capacity: 80 bikes). This first location was expanded and in 2013 a second location with 120 parking places opened at the same station (n°9). A third location was opened in Bollate Nord station (capacity: 100 bikes), bringing **a total of 380 parking spaces**. The facilities offer parking space during the day for Bollate residents commuting to work by train. **The parking spaces are open from the first until the last train (05:00-00:30)**. The facilities were created using vacant space in the railway stations. Although the available space is limited, a fairly large number of cycle racks in different shapes have been placed inside.



- In both stations, the parkings are **strategically located where it is visible and on the route between station entrances and platforms**, making bike-train connection times short. At Bollate Centro the facilities are well used with an occupancy rate of almost 90% (especially on sunny days). However, at Bollate Nord that figure is around 25%. It seems that cycle use has been rising due to efficient cycle parkings. Before installation, the same amount of bikes was not parked around the station. It is free to use each Velostazione but it is only allowed with an access card. There are now more than 500 access cards issued (for 380 parking spaces) so a waiting list is being used for any new requests.

- A key success factor is **the community spirit around the Velostazione in Bollate Centro**. The pro-

ject is strongly embedded locally. The municipality is the most important funder of the project. Local organisation 'Fabbrica dei segni' is the social enterprise that manages the parkings and repair shop. An enthusiastic group of volunteers do their best to make the cycle station a success. Even teachers of nearby high-schools are partner in the project and encourage students that have problems at school to work in the cycle station offering them the chance to acquire technical skills. The nice atmosphere makes the cycle parkings function as a central meeting point for commuters and other people involved.

- If requested beforehand, **it is possible to have your bike repaired at Bollate Centro by volunteers** and the high school students of the nearby school. The repair shop is very popular and running at full capacity. Commuters can leave their bikes during the day and pick it up at the end of their working day.

- No cycles have been stolen from the parkings**, mainly because access is restricted with the access card system and social control. A low-cost and practical surveyance in Bollate Centro are security cameras monitored at the station.

- Both stations also have **unguarded, covered bike parking spaces outside the station**. They should be better visible and/or properly indicated. Also, dedicated (covered) parking space for mopeds and scooters is needed as they now use the cycle parking space instead.





## BB2. PUBLIC BIKE

- In Bollate there is no real public bike share scheme available like OV-Fiets. At Bollate Centro (Velostazione) it is possible to rent a limited number of bikes. At Bollate Nord station around 150 available bikes were rented to visitors of the Milano Expo 2015 to explore the area. Ferrovie Nord is looking for ways to make these bikes accessible again within a public bike share scheme not only for touristic purpose.

## BB3. UNITY OF BIKE-TRAIN ORGANISATIONS

- The Velostazione in Bollate was the first in the region and realised thanks to a group of committed people. There was no existing cooperation model but **thanks to a relatively simple financial model** with support from local government (investing in cycle racks including maintenance) and Infra Manager Ferrovie Nord (offering the space in the stations free of charge) **the volunteers from social enterprise 'Fabbrica dei segni' were able to operate the parkings.**

## BB4. INTEGRATED PAYMENT SYSTE

- From the start, every user was **a local resident with an access card** that corresponded with a numbered tag on the bike. This made social control easier (the owner of a bike that has been parked too long was being called for example). Recently, **also the regional public transport smart travel cards can be enabled to provide access to the bike parkings in Bollate.** It makes the combined bike-train journey easier, but it is important to find the right balance between the success of a locally embedded system and general availability.

## BB5. COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- No specific marketing actions were needed to attract users after opening the Velostazione. Users indicate that the facility 'sold' itself as **they became enthusiastic by the positive image created by the employees that promote the BiTiBi approach** (n°10 & 11). In contrast, the Bollate Nord cycle station is not well used. The free safe bike parking in this location could benefit from promotional activities.





## BB6. UNDERSTANDING OF INFRASTRUCTURE SITUATION

- Despite the discontinuous cycle infrastructure and lack of priority rules for cyclists at intersections, **cycling seems to be normal for people in Bollate** and people don't seem to be afraid of cycling on the main roads. Several routes have separate bike lanes or shared lanes for pedestrians and cyclists. In residential neighbourhoods motorized traffic seems to be driving at a slow pace and cycling is easy (n°12). New bicycle routes are being developed at the northern side of town, mainly aimed for tourists.

- Main issue is that cyclists are not treated well around the station of Bollate Centro.** A few suggestions are to construct clear cycle routes to the station or at least a cycle route passing in front of the station to provide more comfort.

- The most important observation after cycling around Bollate **is the big contrast that exists between decent, well organised cycle routes and virtually non-existing infrastructure.** Apart from very clear cycle lanes (N°13), some of the problems that are found in most Italian cities are present: lack of cycle tracks on dangerous places that make you either behave like a pedestrian on the sidewalk or like a car on busy roads. It is important to develop more cycle-attractive routes that are signposted and have more or less the same quality of cycle infrastructure.

