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BiTiBi.eu



Local final reports on BiTiBi pilots

Actions performed, general impact, future
development and recommendations

UNITED-KINGDOM

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Italy



Belgium



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Spain



United Kingdom



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1 Background

The future of urban mobility is a return to a tried and tested combination of bicycles and trains. BiTiBi is an innovative, three-year project co-funded by the European Union aimed at improving the liveability of European cities and improving the energy efficiency of our transport. Combining the two most energy efficient modes of transportation, the bicycle and the train, provides a seamless door-to-door transport connection. Faster, easier and cooler.



BiTiBi services use the Dutch model as inspiration in promoting the bike-train- bike modal merger over cars and the combination of cars and trains. The project aims to replicate the Dutch system and to solve the typical issues such as lack of parking for bikes at stations; no last mile solution when taking the train; ineffective fare integration or worse, none at all; bike services not corresponding to user needs; no bicycle friendly access to train stations; lack of knowledge about the available services and cultural barriers to use a train-bike-train combination.

BiTiBi expects to substitute journeys by car with bike-train-bike transport and to increase the modal share of the bicycle for the first and last mile of train journeys in the pilot projects by 2017 - and in the EU by 2020. The project goal is to decrease car use by several million km/year and CO2 emissions by several 100 tons/year in the 4 pilot projects.

Merseyrail joined the BiTiBi project to learn from the Dutch system and to use this knowledge and experience to encourage further growth and usage of the already existing secured cycle shelters and bike hire scheme Bike &Go. This report is part of WP3 and has the objective to build capacity and transfer knowledge among stakeholders, to engage users into the design, the implementation and the promotion of local actions and, above all, to implement the BiTiBi pilot actions.

Starting from the Plan of Pilot Projects (D3.2 deliverable) this deliverable aims at presenting the local final reports on BiTiBi pilots. It contains the description of the actions performed, the troubles encountered, the positive and negative outcomes, and the users' suggestions. The target group of this deliverable are the own railway company, other stakeholders, other railway companies.

2 BiTiBi actions performed

For Bike & Go & Go Cycle, the majority of activities performed for the BiTiBi were about increasing awareness of the product and to encourage customers to include a bike trip in their train journey. In this section we will outline three of the main themes and actions and their effects:

Bike & Go Corporate offer

Description:

A new corporate offer was developed for organisations that want to offer their staff the possibility to hire a bike on their journeys to work or meetings. This offer was already in place for a while, but it was not communicated to the market yet. A range of actions was performed in the BiTiBi project to launch the offer:

- A corporate webpage was added to www.bikeandgo.co.uk so interested businesses could find more information on the scheme and the call to action to contact us (figure 1).
- A workshop with stakeholders and corporate sales managers of the participating TOCs was held to discuss how the corporate offer can best be sold to corporate clients.
- New corporate leaflets were developed and sent out to all corporate sales managers of the participating TOCs (figure 2).
- The PR and Social Media professionals working for Bike & Go contacted their other corporate clients to promote the corporate offer and explore the possibility to feature in our corporate launch promotional work as case studies.

Effects:

- Several businesses contacted us after seeing the corporate page on the website and have signed up for a corporate membership.
- A local charity signed up for Bike & Go and put out a press release on the bike rides they organise (figure 3).
- The PR and Social Media professionals will organise a PR event in the summer of 2016 to promote the corporate offer featuring two of their clients who will sign up for the scheme.
- Several the Bike & Go followers on Twitter have liked and retweeted the link to the corporate page so the message was spread to their followers as well (figure 4).

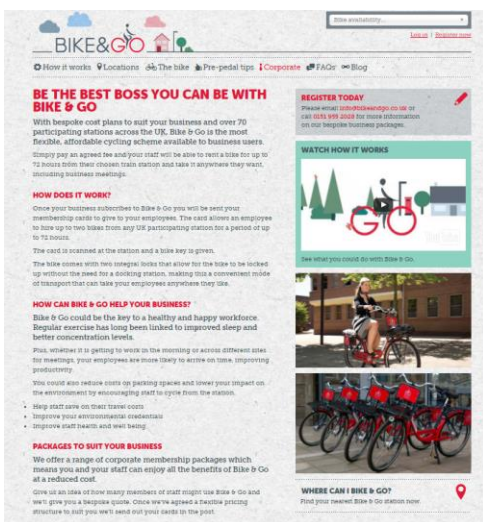


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

The actions to be undertaken in the pilot stations to enable BiTiBi
bitibi.eu fb/biketrainbike @biketrainbike

Promotion at stations

Description:

A range of activities were performed to increase the visibility of Bike & Go at the participating stations. In most of our locations, the Bike & Go bikes are tucked away in secured shelters and not really visible for the public. In addition, we wanted to promote the 'hire a bike today' message as this leads to new sign up and rentals. From staff feedback we know that a lot of customers are not aware of the fact that you can hire a bike straight away if you sign up on the spot. They think they have to wait for their card to arrive in the post. This means we were missing out on a lot of impulse customers. We therefore have done the following marketing activities to promote Bike & Go and sign up on the spot as part of the BiTiBi project:

- All 69 Bike & Go stations received a Bike & Go flag, on the flag it says: "want to hire me today? I only cost £3.80 per 24 hours. Ask a member of staff or visit www.bikeandgo.co.uk for more details." Each station took a Bike & Go bike from the shelter and put it in a visible location with the flag attached to it (figure 5).
- All stations put up new large banners promoting the 'hire me today message'
- Key stations received additional branding for gate paddles and vinyls for walls to enhance the Bike & Go promotion (figure 6).
- New posters were put up at all the locations right next to the bikes. In addition, all the Merseyrail locations received a new poster to promote the secure cycle shelters (figure 7).

Effects:

- Promoting the 'hire a bike today' message and the visibility of the bikes at the stations have directly resulted in a significant increase in rentals and subscriptions; rentals more than tripled after the new posters and branding were put on compared to the periods before, and more than doubles compared to the same period in the year before. One station where additional branding was put up on the gate paddles and walls went from 2 rentals in the month before the branding was put up, to 27 rentals in the month after.
- Approximately 50% of new customers signing up hire a bike on the same day, proving that the message is coming across.

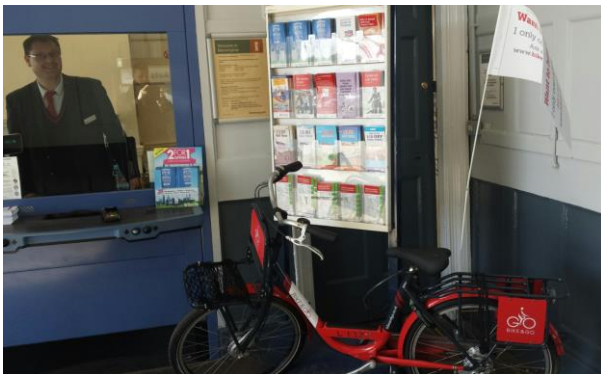


Figure 5

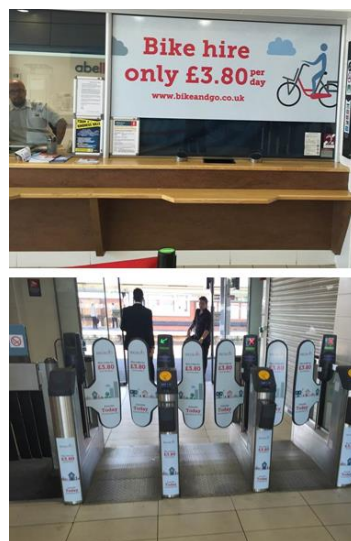


Figure 6



Figure 7

Bike & Go buddy scheme

Description:

From best practice shared by OV-Fiets in the Netherlands it is known that most customers sign up after their peers have encouraged them to do so. This word to mouth promotion is a very valuable mechanism. Therefore the Bike & Go buddy scheme was developed to encourage existing customers to invite their friends to sign up. If the friend accepts the invitation, both will be awarded a free rental (figure 8). The buddy scheme is promoted in the June Bike & Go newsletter. In addition, all new customers automatically receive an email encouraging them to invite their friends through the buddy scheme after their first rental.

Effects:

The buddy scheme was only recently activated. Results on uptake will be shared in the second half of 2016.



The screenshot shows a web interface for the 'Bike & Go' buddy scheme. At the top, the logo 'BIKE&GO' is displayed with a stylized figure riding a bike. Below the logo is a navigation menu with buttons for 'Customer info', 'Cards', 'Payment info and invoices', 'Transaction history', 'Lost or stolen', 'Email newsletter', and 'Bike & Go buddy scheme'. The main content area is titled 'Welcome to the Bike & Go buddy scheme' and includes a brief explanation of the scheme. Below this is a form with five rows for entering friend information. The first row is pre-filled with 'test' for the first name and surname, and 'thatslinda@hotmail.com' for the email address. A 'Send Invitation' button is located below the form. At the bottom of the page, there is a decorative banner with various icons representing different modes of transport and buildings.

	First Name	Surname	Email address
1.	test	test	thatslinda@hotmail.com
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Figure 10

3 BiTiBi actions general impacts

Bike & Go rentals and members

During the BiTiBi project, both the yearly total of Bike & Go rentals and members have more than tripled between 2014 and 2016. This growth is significant and shows that there is a lot of potential for this product to become an established and valued service at UK railway stations.

Survey results

From the surveys that were conducted during the BiTiBi project we can see that Bike & Go has a positive effect on the usage of the train: 11% of the respondents say they were using the car for the entire journey before they became a Bike & Go member. In addition, 14% stated that they would not have made the trip before being a Bike & Go member. This means that 25% of the respondents are new train users, showing that Bike & Go is effective and leads to more train journeys. The same conclusion can be made for the secure cycle shelters: 15% of the respondents that use the cycle shelter state that they were using different modes of transport for the entire journey before they had access to the shelter.

The user survey also revealed that the visibility of the bikes and posters on the station is effective: over half of the Bike & Go members said they knew about Bike & Go because of the marketing and communication at the station itself. This result helps to justify the marketing budget and acquiring space on stations for banners and posters. In addition, it shows that local promotion is essential when a new station is added.

The awareness survey that was conducted at two pilot stations in 2014 and in 2016 also shows that the marketing actions that were part of the BiTiBi project turned out very successful: 45% of the respondents have heard about bike hire and bike parking at the station in 2016 while this was only 5% in 2014.

Door-to-door strategy

The BiTiBi project encouraged Merseyrail to include door-to-door transport into their strategy: an integrated transport strategy is currently being developed that will cover Bike & Go, secure cycle shelters, car parking, busses and all other access and egress modes. Encouraging train users to cycle to and from the station has now become part of related strategies as well such as the communication and environmental strategy.

Partners

In addition, the BiTiBi actions concerning our stakeholders have resulted in an increased support and awareness of Bike & Go: several stakeholders have reached out to us to further promote the scheme and want to include in their communication. This includes hotels, councils, local businesses, cycling groups and many more.

4 BiTiBi future development

The BiTiBi project has provided Merseyrail with a range of new tools to encourage customers to use our secure cycle shelters and Bike & Go in combination with their train journey. These tools will provide a lot of relevant data that will be used as input in future promotional developments. One example is the CRM report which was one of the deliverables in the BiTiBi project: this report provides valuable insights in the rental behaviour of our customers and their statistics. This data has now become available to further investigate and will be used to create bespoke marketing messages and offers.

Furthermore, a few new stations will be added to the Bike & Go network in the coming months. We will use the same promotional materials as were delivered in the BiTiBi project to create awareness and encourage people to sign up.

With our social media professional we have put a method in place to receive constructive and useful user feedback. As our social media channels are public, customers can read each other's feedback and retweet as well. We will continue to use this valuable feedback to improve our product: customers are providing us with tips on where to open a new Bike & Go location, or which station they would suggest to put up more signage to locate the bikes.

5 Recommendations

In this section we will outline some valuable lessons learned in the BiTiBi project:

- **When you develop something new, shout about it!**

Both the corporate offer and the possibility to sign up on the spot became available in 2015. However: no real communication plan was set up to accompany the launch. This resulted in businesses not being aware that an offer existed, and loss of potential customers who noticed the bikes at the station but were not informed that they could use them straight away. With the BiTiBi project, we were able to execute an intensive communication and marketing plan which allowed us to spread the word. Immediately after these actions were performed, there was a significant uptake in rentals and new (business) customers.

- **Learn from others and be aware of finances**

Cycling is still a growing market in most countries and there are a million alternatives out there which you can adopt to encourage cycling. However not all of them are proving to be successful. Research previous initiatives (like BiTiBi!) to find out which are successful and most importantly: sustainable in the long term.

- **Get a professional back office supplier**

Bike hire schemes are highly dependent on the back office system to correctly process customer accounts, rentals and invoices. These processes need to run without errors as they can affect your relationship with your customer. So it is worth it to find a trustworthy and experienced back office supplier to set up your system.

- **Make a long term business case**

Bike schemes often require high set up costs. However, be aware that there are always considerable operational costs involved as well. The product does not lend itself for high revenues from customers, and it takes a few years for a product to grow when it is introduced to the market. Bike schemes should aim to reach break-even to be sustainable in the long term. By improving the possibilities to use the bike as an access and egress mode, you decrease the barriers for people to choose the train. Understand that the profit is not in £ or €, but in more people using the train and lowering your impact on the environment as a train operating company.

- **Connect**

There is a lot of momentum at this moment to encourage cycling. There are numerous cycling and lobby groups out there and every council has a cycling officer that focuses on increasing cycling in their area. The BiTiBi project has shown that connecting with stakeholders helps to increase awareness of your product and opens the door to reach new audiences.