



BIKES AND TRAINS: 7 BASIC SERVICES THAT GIVE CYCLISTS A SMILE

A collection of good practice examples of integrating cycling with long-distance and international rail services

About the European Cyclists' Federation

With over 80 members across more than 40 countries, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) unites cyclists' associations from across the globe, giving them a voice on the international level. Our aim is to get more people cycling more often by influencing policy in favor of cycling.

We stimulate and organise the exchange of information and expertise on bicycle related strategies as well as the work of the cyclists' movement.

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COVER PHOTO

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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

The EU has set itself ambitious targets to reduce the environmental impact of transport. These include reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 60%, from 1990 levels, by 2050. However, since 1990 transport GHG emissions have in fact increased by about 20 %. If the EU is to achieve its objective on decarbonising transport then much more needs to be done to realise a modal shift in passenger transport towards more sustainable modes of transport, such as cycling and rail.

The combination of bikes and trains provides a genuine alternative to less sustainable modes, such as private motor vehicles and air-planes, in seamless door-to-door mobility. This includes long distance and international journeys.

The purpose of this document is to identify good practices, from across Europe, which help to integrate cycling with long distance and international rail services. By adopting measures similar to those highlighted in this collection, the ECF believes that rail companies will not only help to bring a smile to the faces of cyclists but also increase the modal share of both cycling and trains. This in turn will help the EU to achieve its targets and contribute towards a more sustainable future for the continent .



Ádám Bodor
ECF Advocacy Director

INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of good practices designed to improve the integration of cycling with long distance and international rail services. It is meant to inspire railway undertakings who plan to upgrade their services over the coming years. The intention is to provide an overview of leading practices from around Europe rather than a detailed design guide but there are links and references included in the text for anyone interested in finding out more information. As implied by the title, a distinction has been made between long distance/international rail services and regional or local services, although many of the points highlighted in this document are applicable for all rail services.

Back in April 2012, the ECF published a position paper entitled 'Bike and Train: A European Odyssey'¹, which highlighted the fact that the services offered by railway companies often do not meet the basic requirements of cyclists and that current EU law² on passenger rights for railway customers does not help to advance this issue. Fortunately, some railway companies have improved their services in the intervening years, although this has often been after continuous pressure from the ECF's members. We believe that other railway companies should follow suit to attract new customers.

Railways' share of the modal split within the EU has seen little growth since 1995 (6.5% in 1995 compared to 6.6% in 2013) according to the EU Transport in Figures Statistical Pocketbook³. Indeed, the only mode that has experienced significant growth during this period is air travel (6.5% compared to 9%), although information related to cycling is unfortunately not included in this dataset. If the railways' share of the modal split is to increase then it is clear that it needs to do more to attract new customers.

By implementing the types of measures highlighted in this document and encouraging more people to integrate bicycle and train travel, railway companies can increase the catchment areas of their services and provide a genuine alternative to private motor vehicles in door-to-door journeys. It is for this reason that promoting intermodality is one of the EU transport policy priorities and is also supported by national and regional transport authorities across the continent.

Consumers are also increasingly aware of their environmental footprint. For long-distance journeys, the combination of bike and train is one of the most environmentally friendly ways of travelling. Increasing the numbers of people making this combination can make a significant contribution towards meeting the targets of the EU and its Member States with regards to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. In some cases, bicycle user organisations have entered into "mobility alliances"⁴ with railway companies to convey this message to the wider public.

A key message ECF made back in 1999 still holds true: "Only bicycle transport by train offers the flexibility to choose the starting point and destination of a cycling trip freely and this is a promising market for all rail investors to invest in."⁵ Cycling tourism is a booming business with over 2.3 billion cycle tourism trips annually in Europe⁶ and the demand is still increasing. A service package that meets the needs of cycling tourists has the potential to attract millions of additional train passengers, who will often be willing to travel during off-peak periods.

Now is a good time to act: the financial crisis and the continuing drop in car sales, together with changing mobility behaviour, in particular among young adults in urban areas, has the potential to win customers for life.

The central question is: When is a railway customer who wants to combine their train journey with a bicycle a happy customer?

ECF has identified the main conditions that should be in place under seven separate headings:



Information (online; in the stations; on the rolling stock): Railway company websites have a dedicated section containing all necessary information related to bicycles (i.e. terms and conditions) and online timetable search engines come with a bicycle carriage query function. Within railway stations the location of bike parking and bike rental are clearly signed. It is also indicated which coaches on each service carry bicycles and where customers should stand on the platform in order to board with their bicycle (supported by platform announcements). Finally, displayed on the rolling stock itself are clearly visible bicycle signs marking which coaches include bicycle compartments.



Prices of bicycle tickets should be per journey, not per train. The cost for a bicycle ticket as accompanied luggage on a national train should not exceed 10 Euro. The cost for an international bicycle ticket as accompanied luggage should not exceed 15 Euro. Ideally, frequent travellers can benefit from annual bike passes, multipacks of 1-day bike passes or other advantageous offers.



Ticket reservation schemes and sales channels: Whether buying a train ticket from a counter, an automatic machine or online it is possible to reserve a bicycle space at the same time. Reservation is optional, and seats can be reserved near the bicycle.



Accessibility (both in the station and outside): Cycle signs for railway stations should be provided on major cycle routes at least within 3 km. On approaching the station, it should be clear – both in terms of signage and cycling infrastructure – the best way either to enter the building or to access the cycle parking facility. It should equally be clear how to access major cycle routes when leaving stations too. Elevators should be a standard facility at busy stations to help improving access to platforms. At smaller stations, bicycle escalators or bicycle stairways should be provided as an alternative.



Bicycle carriage of 'complete' bicycles is possible on all train categories and train services. There should be at least 8 spaces for bicycles in a dedicated area. Bicycles can be locked and e-bicycles can be recharged. Ideally, there is sufficient space for storing and manoeuvring tandems, recumbents and bike trailers. If coaches are not on ground level, loading and unloading of bicycles is made easier by providing ramps.



Bicycle parking at railway stations: In larger stations bicycles can be stored and accessed at least 15 minutes before the first and 15 minutes after the last train service at guarded stations with management, or 24/7 at stations with automated access systems or in bicycle lockers.



Bike-sharing systems operated by railway companies: For customers not intending to travel with their own bicycle, bicycles can be rented from the railway companies' own bike-sharing system. If the railway company is not rolling out its own system, integrated ticketing with local bike-sharing providers should ensure door-to-door seamless transport.



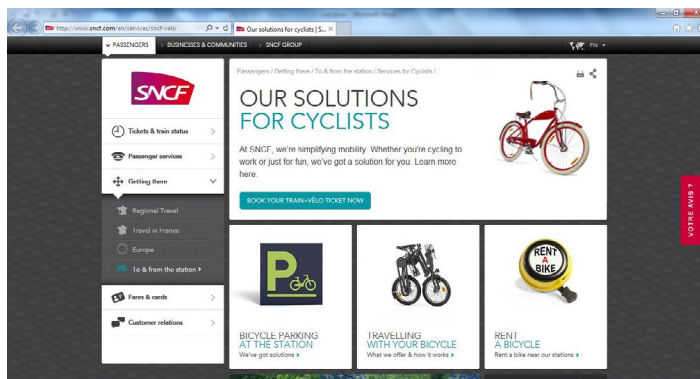
Information

1. Website of the railway company

1.1 AVAILABILITY OF GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT BICYCLE SERVICES ONLINE:

A dedicated page on 'terms and conditions' should inform the customer about all relevant aspects of bicycle carriage (i.e. prices, sales channels, differences of the service conditions between national and international trains if any, etc.) and other relevant information. Ideally, this information should be offered in several languages (as a minimum the national language(s) and English). The French 'Vélo SNCF' fulfils all these requirements:

<http://www.sncf.com/en/services/sncf-velo>



Source: <http://www.sncf.com/en/services/sncf-velo>

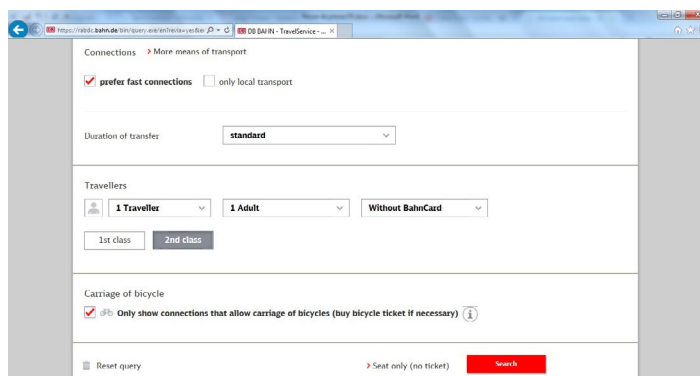
Other good examples are:

- Deutsche Bahn (Germany): http://www.bahn.de/p/view/service/fahrrad/mitnahme/bahn_und_fahrrad.shtml
- SBB-CFF-FFS (Switzerland): <http://www.sbb.ch/en/station-services/car-bike/on-the-move-by-bike.html>
- České dráhy (Czech Republic): <http://www.cd.cz/en/volny-cas/cd-bike/default.htm>
- VR (Finland): https://www.vr.fi/cs/vr/en/bicycles_new

1.2 BICYCLE CARRIAGE QUERY FUNCTION

As long as bicycle carriage of 'complete' bicycles is not the standard, all online timetable search engines should come with a bicycle carriage query function.

Deutsche Bahn clearly sets the benchmark here with the best service to bicycle customers: there is a tick box 'Only show connections that allow carriage of bicycles' on their online timetable search engine. The query function exists for national and international trips alike. Customers can even buy the bicycle ticket online. The online timetable search engine of the Czech national railway company ČD can also be modified so that it only show trains with bicycle carriage but the ticket cannot be purchased online. The Swiss SBB has a similar bicycle query function only for national journeys.



Deutsche Bahn search engine. Source: <https://reiseauskunft.bahn.de/bin/query.exe/en>



2. Information within the station

2.1 SIGNAGE

Within stations (and their surroundings) there should be clear signage, both for people arriving by train or by bike, providing directions to bicycle parking, bike rental or other relevant services.



Signage of a cycle storage at a regional SNCF station (Villefranche sur Saône) in Rhône-Alpes area, France (Desmet 2016)



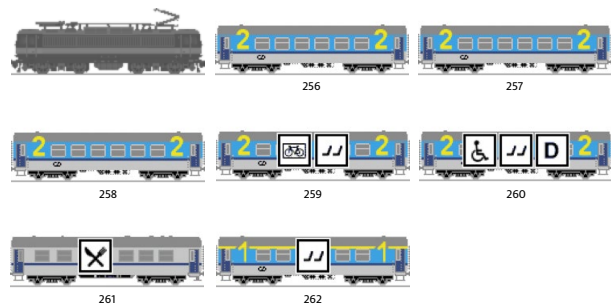
Signage of a bikestation at Toulouse-Matabiau station, France (Desmet, 2016)

2.2 LOCATION ON THE PLATFORM

High-speed trains often stop only for a few minutes. To properly manage the timely loading of bicycles and avoid possible delays, customers need to know which section of the platform their coach is going to halt. They should be guided by diagrams, either paper (e.g. Deutsche Bahn) or electronic (e.g. SNCF), which clearly indicate where the coaches are going to stop. In addition, platform voice announcements in the local language(s), and preferably also in English, should be given before the arrival of the train. For instance: “The coach for transporting bicycles is coupled in the front section of the train.” (ČD).



Coach no 7 is offering place for bicycles. Source: Deutsche Bahn



Coach no 259 is offering place for bicycles. Source: České dráhy



Sign indicating where cyclists should wait on the platform at Bath Spa Station (UK)

3. Information on the rolling stock

The bicycle compartment should be visibly indicated on the rolling stock itself, as shown in the examples below:



SBB-CFF-FFS (Switzerland). Source: http://img.static.airport-medien.airport-media.com/54646/617118/h_seehas_-_sbb_cff_ffs_komfortable_fahrradbef%C3%B6rderung.jpg



S-train Copenhagen (Denmark)



eské dráhy (Czech railways) – special bike coach



ZSSK (Slovakia) – long-distance IC train



TER Rhône-Alpes (France)



NS regional train (Netherlands)



Ticket Prices

Bicycle carriage is a service offered by railway companies to its customers; it is therefore acceptable that the latter pay an adequate fee to the former. However, to reduce the barriers and encourage people to combine bike and train, bicycle tickets should be per journey and not per train.

It should be noted that some railway companies, such as CFL in Luxembourg, offer bicycle carriage free of charge, which is supported. For a relatively recent overview of the pricing policy of different railway companies across Europe, consult the Annex of the 2012 study 'The European cycle route network, EuroVelo'.⁷

In our opinion, the cost for a bicycle ticket on a national train should not exceed 10 Euro and the cost for an international bicycle ticket should not exceed 15 Euro. Ideally, frequent travellers can benefit from annual bike passes or multipacks of 1-day bike passes, as it is the case with Swiss SBB/CFF/FSS. For example, Belgian NMBS/SNCB offers a Bike Day Ticket for 8 Euro without any timetable restriction and the same type of ticket also exists in the Netherlands (NS) for 6.10 Euro. Deutsche Bahn's customers who have a BahnCard pay 6 Euro instead of 9 Euro for a bicycle on single long-distance journeys.

There is often a difference between international long-distance and international regional train services. Customers can sometimes find discounted regional one day cross-border tickets (e.g. Labe-Elbe, EURO-NISA-TICKET) offering a very reasonably priced option for transporting a bicycle but this may not always be a convenient option for customers travelling longer distances.





Ticket reservation schemes and sales channels

It should be possible to reserve and buy a bicycle space via the following channels: at the counter, at automatic machines, and online. In the ECF's 1999 paper, 5 different reservation policies were categorised, from A (Best) to E (worst).

- A: reservation is optional, and seats can be reserved near the bicycle
- B: reservation is optional, but there is no provision for reserving seats near the bicycles
- C: reservation is mandatory
- D: reservation is not possible, but there are at least 20 spaces for bicycles
- E: reservation is possible, and there are less than 20 spaces for bicycles

Deutsche Bahn, for example, has a policy whereby a bicycle ticket needs to be purchased at the same time when travelling on IC and CNL (night) trains. This can be done online. The company says on its website the default solution is that the seat and the bicycle space are located in the same coach. SNCF has the same facility too.

VOTRE CONFIRMATION E-BILLET

PARIS MONT 1 ET 2 / RENNES Service inclus : VELO VOIT 10.00 EUR		47,00 EUR CA
Nom : POULIDOR	DOSSIER VOYAGE : URPRHM	
Prénom : RAYMOND	Référence client : 0029090165280001422	
Voyageur : ADULTE	N° e-billet : 417833172	

Départ / Arrivée	Date / Heure	TGV	TGV LOISIR REDUIT-E DEPART
PARIS MONT 1 ET 2	21/06 à 08h08	TRAIN N° 8711 VOITURE 11 - PLACE 25 2e CLASSE / PLACE ASSISE VELO VOIT 11 PERIODE NORMALE	
RENNES	21/06 à 10h27		E-Billet valable uniquement

Présence à quai obligatoire 2 mn avant départ.

SNCF TGV e-ticket (2014) with a bicycle space in the same coach where is the customer's seat
Source: <https://blog.trainline.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/e-billet-place-velo.png>





Accessibility

1. Outside the station

It is very important that cycle signs for railway stations are provided on major cycle routes at least within 3 km of the station building. While approaching the station, it should be clear – both in terms of signage and cycling infrastructure – the best way to enter the building and the cycle parking facility. It should be made equally accessible to join major cycle routes when arriving at a destination and exiting a station.



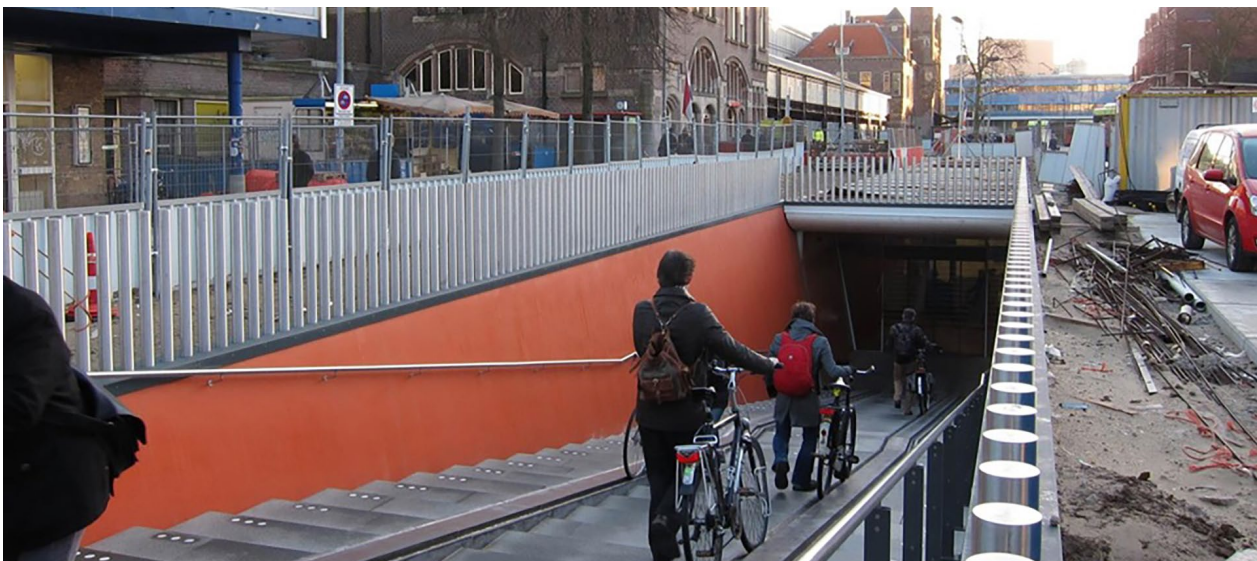
Signage of railway station on cycle route in Nantes, France (B. Desmet)



Signage of railway station on cycle route in Hungary. Photo by Béla Németh (GySEV-Raaberbahn)

2. Inside the station

Bicycles, in particular electric ones, can be heavy items for every age group. Even more so if they carry luggage, as it is the case with many cycle tourists. Elevators at busy stations should be a standard facility to help improving access to platforms. At smaller stations where elevators are too expensive to operate, bicycle escalators or bicycle stairways should be provided. In the case of bicycle stairways, there should be enough distance from the railing to be able to leave the luggage on the bicycle.



Bicycle stairway in The Netherlands. Source: ProRail



Bicycle carriage

Of all the services offered to cyclists on long distance and international trains, bicycle carriage is the most important one. There are two types of carriage: the transport of bicycles as accompanied luggage or as unaccompanied luggage.

1. Bicycle transport as accompanied luggage

1.1 COMPLETE BICYCLES

Bicycle transport as accompanied luggage means that the bicycle travels with the customer. Ideally⁸, there is a specific bicycle compartment where the 'complete' bicycle⁹ can be stalled and locked on bicycle racks. Among all European railway companies, Swiss railways SBB are setting the benchmark: On all train categories and services operated by SBB, bicycle carriage is possible. While the number of bicycle places may vary, there are at least 5 racks in each IC train. It is also necessary that the customer travelling with a bicycle has an easy access into the train from the platform level while carrying the bicycle in his/her hands. Modern low-floor regional trains are usually well equipped for this purpose but at least one pair of wide doors should be present also in high-speed and long-distance trains which accept bicycles on board in order to facilitate the loading and unloading.

Good news arrived from Austria in Autumn 2012, when Austrian railways ÖBB announced that it would equip all 51 high-speed Railjet trains with one bicycle compartment per train. This announcement had important implications on the European level too because Railjet also serves international destinations (e.g. Budapest, Munich, Zürich, Prague). With the provision of electric chargers ÖBB also addressed properly the phenomenon of an increased market share of electric bicycles (pedelecs). Initially announced for being fully implemented by Spring 2013, the roll out is still in process. The whole fleet of Austrian Railjets trains will be equipped with a special bicycle compartment with 5 storage spaces by Spring 2017 and reservation of a space in advance will be possible.



Austria's ÖBB high-speed Railjet train with a compartment for 5 bicycles. © ÖBB/Eisenberger

On Deutsche Bahn long-distance trains, bicycle carriage was declining between 1995 and 2003 with the ongoing replacement of IR, IC and EC trains by high-speed ICE trains. The good news is that the future ICx trains that shall be put into service between 2016 and 2024, and gradually replace IC, ICE-1 and ICE-2 trains, will offer place for 8 bicycles. Inconveniences will, nevertheless, remain. For example, it is currently not possible to transport bicycles on the high-speed line Brussels-Frankfurt which is operated by modern ICE-3 trains. As for the TGV of SNCF in France, bicycle carriage is somewhat erratic: on a number of TGV services bicycle carriage is an option, while it is not on others, depending on the destination and the TGV generation. It is difficult to see a clear policy.

Some railway companies allow bicycle carriage without having a dedicated bicycle area. This can work fine but it can also cause problems in crowded trains when it can lead to conflicts between different users.



1.2 FOLDED OR DISSEMBLED BICYCLES

It is possible to transport folded or dissembled bicycles in nearly all rail services in Europe although the requirements and conditions do vary (e.g. on Thalys they must fit into a bag or box no bigger than 120 × 90cm). While this is an option for some cyclists and is supported, it should not substitute being able to transport assembled/complete cycles. Folding bikes account for a relatively small amount of the market. A large number of cyclists are not comfortable dissembling and reassembling their cycles and for those that are willing to do this, the dissembled bike becomes an additional piece of (heavy) luggage to be carried. In order to encourage intermodal journeys, it should be made as easy as possible to integrate cycling and rail services.

2. 5.2. Bicycle transport as unaccompanied luggage

This final option is when the bicycle does not travel with its owner. This arrangement is often found with night sleeper or couchette trains but is also used by Eurostar. For the specific nature of the Eurostar connection (i.e. passport control, security check etc.) it seems to be a logical solution; however, it is quite expensive (25-30 GBP/journey), the number of spaces on each train is limited and the booking procedure is complicated. Usually both complete and dissembled bicycles are accepted by railway companies that offer unaccompanied luggage services.



Eurostar accepts fully-mounted bikes (London St Pancras) - Source: <http://www.cyclinguk.org/news/20151113-ctc-wot-won>



Bicycle parking at railway stations

When it comes to bicycle parking at railway stations, the Netherlands is second to none. Two figures illustrate and explain this: 40 % of daily train travellers arrive by bicycle at the railway station and 15 % take the bicycle after arrival to cycle to their destination. Dutch railways NS and ProRail therefore started a programme with the objective to create an additional capacity for bicycles at railway. There are now 444 000 bicycle spaces in Dutch railway stations¹⁰.

There are four main different types of bicycle parking in the Netherlands:

1. Guarded stations with management, operated by subcontractors commissioned by NS.

The subcontractor can also run a bicycle point (fiets punt) or bicycle shop for bike repairs and sale of bicycle and bicycle components. Guarded stations typically open 15 minutes before departure of the first train service and close 15 minutes after arrival of the last one.



Source: ProRail

2. Automated access system by subscription card.



Source: CROW-Fietsberaad

3. Bicycle lockers can often be found at smaller stations and can be rented on an annual basis.



13681 by Dylan Passmore - Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dylanpassmore/10560301745/>

4. Unguarded parking is the last priority but still provides an important role, as a low cost option (for both rail operator and user), even in the Netherlands. Should at least provide protection from the weather and monitored by CCTV.



Source: ProRail





Bicycle sharing systems by railway companies

This document mainly looked into the services to be offered to customers with their own bicycle. However, to complete the picture, railway companies should ideally also rent their own bikes for people who do not want or need to use their cycles for all of their journey. A number of railway companies have already done so, notably:

Call a Bike



- NS Netherlands: OV-Fiets <http://www.ov-fiets.nl/>
- Deutsche Bahn: Call-a-bike <http://www.callabike-interaktiv.de/index.php>
- Czech railways: ČD Bike <https://www.cd.cz/en/volny-cas/pujcovny-kol-cd/-8306/>
- NMBS/SNCB Belgium: BlueBike™ <http://www.blue-bike.be/en/discover>

In the Netherlands, a single chip card ('OV-chipkaart') has been introduced for all public transport systems (train, bus, trams, etc.) across the whole country. This will soon be the only valid public transport ticket for the entire Dutch public transport system. OV-fiets (Public transport-bicycle) can be used with the same card. <https://www.ov-chipkaart.nl/travelling.htm>



Source: Blue-bike

If the railway company is not rolling out its own system, integrated ticketing with local bike-sharing providers should ensure door-to-door seamless transport. For example, holders of BahnCards issued by Deutsche Bahn have a 'City ticket' included in their train ticket at their point of destination, allowing them to use public transport for the final trip. This could be expanded to bike-sharing systems.

REFERENCES

¹ ECF position paper, Bike and Train: A European Odyssey, April 2012.

² Regulation 1371/2007

³ European Commission (2015) EU transport in figures - Statistical Pocketbook 2015: <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/statistics/doc/2015/pocketbook2015.pdf>

⁴ Deutsche Bahn and ECF member ADFC (Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad Club e.V.) have formed a "mobility partnership": <http://www.bahn.de/p/view/service/fahrrad/mitnahme/mobilitaetspartnerschaft.shtml>

⁵ ECF and UCI, Bicycle Transport on International Trains, Brussels 1999.

⁶ University of Central Lancashire, UK and Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, The European cycle route network, EuroVelo 2012

⁷ University of Central Lancashire, UK and Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, The European cycle route network, EuroVelo 2012.

⁸ Ideally, trains are also fit for carrying tandems, recumbents and bike trailers. However, this is beyond the scope of this good practice collection.

⁹ 'Complete' meaning that the bicycle does not need to be disassembled and put into a bag.

¹⁰ NS Annual Report 2015

¹¹ The Belgian 'Blue-bike' national sharing scheme, which is currently located in 41 train stations across the country, is a part of the BiTiBi project. BiTiBi (Bike-Train-Bike) is a three year EU-funded project which aims to inspire all European cities to consider a multimodal approach to mobility by combining bike and train as a door-to-door, energy efficient transport option which saves time. The project's priorities include safe and secure bike parking facilities at train stations, provision of convenient public bikes or an integrated payment system of bike and rail services. As part of the project, pilot measures were implemented in Barcelona, Milan and Liverpool. For more information see here: <http://www.bitibi.eu/>



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