



Bikes on Buses

Increasing cycling and public transport usage

The ACT Government introduced a trial of bike racks on the inter-town 300 bus routes in November 2005. Pedal Power strongly supports this initiative. Bike racks on buses enable cycling and public transport to complement each other, increasing the flexibility and reach of both. They are particularly well suited to lower density cities with good cycling facilities – like Canberra.

USAGE

In March 2006 (only 5 months after the introduction of the service) Pedal Power surveyed bike rack usage at the Civic Bus Interchange. On this basis we estimated at least 200 usages for the week and possibly as many as 400 usages. 37% of the buses with bike racks were carrying bicycles. The popularity of the bike racks on buses has been partly due to the smart choice of route. The inter-town route is a direct, quick, high frequency service run on the main arterial roads connecting the town centres. Rather than wait for an infrequent local bus in their suburb, people can simply cycle to their town centre and wait for between 5 and 10 minutes on daylight weekdays for an inter-town 300 bus between Woden, Civic and Belconnen. Tuggeranong connections are only slightly less frequent.

In December 2006 ACTION buses introduced a new timetable under which all inter-town 300 series buses will be bike rack equipped (except for breakdowns etc). This will increase patronage. (Previously not all 300 buses were bike rack equipped. This uncertainty about whether the next bus coming would have a bike rack discouraged usage.)

Often bike rack-equipped buses travel on routes other than the inter-town 300 series. In these cases these buses will generally not carry bikes. This is because routes have to be surveyed beforehand to ensure buses can safely turn with the extra length added by the bike rack.

It takes less than 10 seconds to put your bicycle on a rack. See <http://www.action.act.gov.au/bikenride.cfm>.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT (2004) aims to increase cycling trips to work by almost 120% between 2001 and 2011. One of the Plan's strategies was to trial bike racks on buses.

Bicycle racks on Canberra buses have been on the public agenda since a trial and purchase of two racks in 1997. However, Australian Design Rules concerning non-essential protrusions on vehicles for safety reasons led to the cancellation of that trial despite their use in North America for many years. Brisbane City Council was successful in gaining a permit for its own trial in 2002/03 and has, since 2002, run a successful trial of bike racks on buses

MORE FACTS ABOUT BIKE RACKS ON BUSES

- **Long proven track record** in North America:
 - installed on approximately one third of all urban buses in the United States (VTPI 2003)
 - many cities equip all of their transit vehicles to ensure access for cyclists
 - safety concerns have not been borne out in practice

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- **Safety benefits**
 - bike racks address the vulnerability of people walking to and from bus stops late at night (especially women)
 - offers a 'safety net' for cyclists faced with mechanical problems, illness, inclement weather etc
 - **Increased bus usage**
 - cycling transit integration is important to encourage transit use in lower density areas
 - convenient access to a bus stop is 10 min by foot (<700m). Cycling is 3 to 4 times faster, increasing this catchment around 10-fold (VTPI 2003)
 - bike racks are popular in off-peak periods to help fill unused capacity
 - evaluations in Colorado showed 50% of users were new to transit, and 27% would have been single occupant vehicle drivers if not for the racks (TRB 2003)
 - **Increase in cycling**
 - bike racks enable people to take up cycling (and build up fitness); by using the bus for part of a trip they can reduce long distances and avoid some hills
- Improved social equity**
- bike racks allow those without a car to reach destinations previously inaccessible due to poor transit services
- **Community support:**
 - surveys in Brisbane have shown 90% support (BCC 2003)

REFERENCES

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