

Barry

Pity you couldn't be at the last meeting.

I don't know whether you see the [Spokes newsletter](#). One of the summer competition prize winners was an idea about bikes on buses.

I wondered if you had made any progress. Take a look at this idea. (front loading of bikes admittedly isn't st. fwd in UK but principle is sound of carrying bikes on buses. Perhaps could approach smaller companies eg Perryman's. Eves etc

Let me know what you think

Regards

Mark James

Summary

A 'Rack'n'Roll' scheme: equip around 200 Scottish bus routes with American style bike racks, so each bus can carry two bikes safely and securely. This would provide back-up for commuters, encourage leisure cycling, and contribute a highly visible reminder of the existence of bikes in the wider transport system. Routes to be selected would probably lead from cities and large towns into surrounding commuter towns and the countryside, e.g., Edinburgh to Melrose.

My proposal is to equip around 200 Scottish bus routes with American-style "Rack-n-Roll" bike racks. Each of these racks allows a bus to carry two bikes safely and securely, with no inconvenience to passengers or driver. The system is used in over 150 American and Canadian cities, where it is credited with bringing about a steady year-on-year increase in bike use. According to one estimate, it was directly responsible for generating 12 million *additional* bike journeys in 2008¹.

In Scotland, the benefits of carrying bikes on trains are well known and accepted. Carrying bikes on buses would bring the same benefits, but would be available to a much larger population. In particular:

1. It would open up new opportunities for cycle commuting. Riders would be able to use their bikes for part of a journey that would be too long to cycle the whole way. It would also provide a reassuring backup: commuters could cycle to work, safe in the knowledge that they can resort to the bus if, for any reason, they're unable to cycle home.
2. It would encourage leisure cycling, especially among less experienced riders who might be nervous of riding in town centres and suburban roads. The bus would let them leapfrog the urban traffic and reach open country quickly and safely.
3. Most importantly, it would provide a highly visible reminder of the existence of bikes in the wider transport system and of the important role they play.

There would also be benefits to bus operators in terms of the extra ridership that would be generated.

The Rack-n-Roll carrier is a foldable rack that is permanently fixed to the front of the bus. Bikes can be loaded or unloaded in about 20 seconds, and one bike can be removed without disturbing the other. American experience shows that there is no increase in bus loading times, as the bikes can be loaded while other passengers are boarding.

The system is completely safe and does not interfere with normal bus operation. The bike is fully protected, even in the event of an emergency stop or minor collision. No part of the bike comes into contact with the other bike or the bus. The rack doesn't have to be removed for vehicle servicing or the bus wash.

I would concentrate the system on routes leading from cities and large towns into surrounding commuter towns and countryside. It's more important to equip every bus on a given route than a few buses on more routes. A good example of a suitable route is the First Scottish 62, from Edinburgh to Melrose via Peebles and Galashiels. This serves around a dozen towns and villages, and reaches good cycling country that's not accessible by rail.

Based on figures published by Sportworks², the largest US manufacturer of the bike-on-bus racks, I estimate that it would cost £400 to equip one bus, including labour costs. The above-mentioned Melrose route requires 11 vehicles to maintain its half-hourly service (including maintenance cover), which indicates a total cost of £4,400 for that route. For £1 million, it would therefore be possible to equip around 200 similar routes throughout Scotland, with money left over for ancillary costs such as publicity. It's hard to think of any other initiative that would do so much to encourage cycling for such a small investment.

Sources and references:

^{1, 2:} Sportworks (www.bicycleracks.com)

Federal Transit Administration: Bicycles and Transit, A Partnership that Works
([http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA Bicycles and Transit Booklet 1999.pdf](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_Bicycles_and_Transit_Booklet_1999.pdf))

Victoria Transport Policy Institute (<http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm2.htm>)

Top photo: Sportworks. *Bottom photo:* Valley Transit, Appleton WI