

Forging Bicycle/Transit Connections at King County Metro



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Highlights

- Background
- Bike program evolution
- Best practices/Metro's experience:
 - Bus bike racks and loading policy
 - Bike counts
- Metro's role in bike sharing
- Challenges
- Partnerships

Metro's System

- Fleet of 1300 coaches
- Annual ridership of 112 million
- Wide range of services
 - Rapid Ride
 - Commuter vans
 - DART
 - Custom bus
 - Community vans, Access
 - Bicycle program
- Other options available:
 - Link, Sounder, streetcar
 - Ferries, Zipcar



Evolution of Bike Program

- 1970's and 80's
 - Initial moves to carry bikes on coaches
- 1990's
 - Lockers at transit facilities
 - Bike racks on all coaches
 - Market Development takes over bike program
- 2000 – present
 - Bike program becomes more comprehensive

Bicycle Program Elements



Basis for Bicycle Program

- Agency mission is about creating mobility
- Leader in TDM since mid-80's
- “Last mile” connection
- Climate change, health, equity goals
- New emphasis on alternative services



Best Practices: Bikes on Transit

Front rack considerations

- Restricted dimensions
- Minimize bike-to-bike contact
- Curbside loading
- Retention vs. ease of use
- Must not block headlights, turn signals, windshield
- Accommodate different wheel sizes, types of bikes



Bicycles Inside Vehicles

- Hooks or interior racks
 - Rapid Ride vehicles
 - Light rail
 - Heavy rail
 - Commuter rail



Bicycles Inside Buses



- **Suburban/Rural Systems**

- Usually at driver's discretion
- Some systems use wheelchair area
- Only on last bus of day in Sacramento

- **Large Transit Systems**

- Few systems allow bikes inside
- Concerns about capacity, passenger conflicts
- Potential for disputes

Folding Bikes

- Most agencies allow folding bikes on buses
- Bikes need to fit under the seat
- CalStart has “last mile” incentive program with L.A. MTA to subsidize folding bikes



Bike Trailer

- Limited market
- Primarily college campuses
- Microsoft bike trailer on SR 520 bridge



Metro's Experience: CBD Loading -- Surface Streets

- Long-time ban on CBD bike loading
 - Allowed only at route's first/last stop
 - Each route first/last stop different
 - Frustrated cyclists
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- Rationale:
 - Buses pull up nose-to-nose
 - Concern about cyclists getting between buses
 - Operator distractions



CBD Loading: Downtown Tunnel

- Initially, could only load at end stations
- With Link light rail, needed consistent policy
- Concerns about on-time performance, step down
- Only one other system had joint operation



Best Practices: Bike Counts

- Varies widely among transit agencies
 - Frequency of counts
 - Methodology
 - Credibility
- Metro's experience
 - Volunteers
 - Drivers push button on farebox
 - System-wide count with research firm
 - Regional bike count – snapshot
- Future: Counter on bus bike rack



Metro's Experience: Bike Sharing

- King County Metro – leadership role
 - “Last mile” benefit
- Convened partnership team
- Write grant applications
- Managed Business Plan
- Program launch late 2013



Bike Sharing in Seattle Area: What's Unique

- Opportunities
 - Headquarters of many large companies
 - Starbucks, Microsoft, Amazon, REI, Gates Foundation
 - Largest cycling club in U.S./culture of cycling
- Challenges
 - Helmets
 - Hills
 - Weather



Challenges/Improvements



- Increase bicycle program budget
- More long-range visioning
- Regular, effective counts
- Bicycle parking as a passenger amenity
- Improve bike locker management
- New bicycle infrastructure

Partnerships: Internal

- Transit Safety
- Transit Operations
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Power & Facilities
- Transit Design & Construction
- Customer Service
- Marketing



Partnerships: External

- Other transit agencies – local and national
- Local jurisdictions
- Major employers/developers
- Cycling community
 - Cascade Bicycle Club – annual events, Major Taylor
 - Bicycle Alliance – operated bikestation, manage lockers

