

Cycling For Everyone

by John Pucher

Part II: Bike Parking

Welcome to the second instalment in this series. The first article in this series focused on the various provision of cycling rights of way of various types as it seemed obvious that, having a place to ride is the most basic prerequisite for cycling. However, But as many studies have shown, the availability of that good bike parking is also important. Just as a driving a car driver relies depends on being able to park both at the origin and destination of each every trip, so does, every cyclist bike trip. requires parking of some kind. In this article, we will first examine the bike parking options in some of the most bike-friendly cities of northern Europe. We will then turn our gaze to North America, where Toronto and Chicago; two cities have been leading the way at the forefront in North America.

Bike Parking in Europe

There are extensive bike parking options of various sorts is available throughout most Dutch, Danish, and German cities. Local governments and public transport systems themselves directly provide a large number of bike parking facilities. Moreover, private developers and building owners are required by local ordinances to provide a specified minimum levels of bike parking both within and adjacent to their buildings.

Aside from the large number of bicycle racks to be found in throughout these cities, the most visible and innovative aspect of bike parking policy are the provision of the state-of-the-art parking facilities at train stations. Immediately in front of the main train station in Muenster, Germany, for example, there is a modern, attractive “bike station” (built in 1999) that offers secure parking for 3,300 bikes as well as bike repairs, bike washing, bike rentals, and direct access to all train platforms. Since that bike station is usually full, Muenster is now constructing a second one bike station just behind the train station, with enough spaces for an additional 2,000 bikes.

Amsterdam is also build constructing a new bike station in front of its central main train station that that will provide sheltered parking for over 10,000 bikes and offer the same range of services as the bike station in Muenster’s. At The central main train station in Groningen (Netherlands) offers, there are three different bike parking facilities: a guarded parking facility with 1,700 bike parking places, an unguarded parking lot with space for 4,150 spaces bikes, and a bicycle parking deck for with 900 more space bikes parking spaces. Indeed, most northern European cities offer a range of bike parking facilities at their train stations. At the very least an absolute minimum, however, virtually all long-distance train stations offer simple, unsheltered bike-racks parking at racks placed in and around the stations.

Trains stations are not alone; Local and regional public transport stations in Dutch, Danish, and German metropolitan areas also offer extensive bike parking of one sort or

another. This includes suburban rail stations, metro stations, and even some light-rail stops. In the Berlin region alone, there were already 24,600 bike-and-ride parking spots at local and regional train stations in 2005, with an additional 7,000 bike parking spots planned by 2010.

Many European city centres also offer special bike parking facilities. The City of Odense, Denmark, recently added 400 sheltered bike racks near its main shopping area as well as a state-of-the-art automatic, secure parking station. Groningen offers 36 major bike parking facilities in its town centre, including seven that are guarded ones to prevent bike theft. In 2007, Muenster added a secured, sheltered parking facility for 300 bikes adjacent to its main shopping district. The City of Copenhagen has 3,300 bike parking spaces in its centre and added 400 between 2000 and 2002. Amsterdam has 15 guarded bicycle parking facilities in its downtown area.

The focus of current policy in Dutch, Danish, and German cities is placed on improving the security of bike parking, since bike theft is a major problem. In addition to bike stations, some cities provide bike parking areas with especially bright lighting and video surveillance. An increasing number of bike parking lots have a parking attendant, who personally guards the parked bikes and controls access to and from the secured parking area. Many Dutch and Danish schools have been introducing guarded bike parking to prevent theft of bikes while they are parked during the school day. The fee for guarded bike parking is modest but fully covers the costs of such facilities.

Bike Parking in Toronto

Toronto has long been the North American leader in bike parking. Its comprehensive bike parking program offers two levels of services parking to meet cyclist needs: Short-term parking includes over 15,000 post-and-ring bike stands on sidewalks; Long-term parking is provided by 152 bike lockers and by the city's first bike station at Union Station in downtown Toronto, which will open in spring 2009; it will offer with spaces for 180 bikes. There are plans for a much larger bike station at Toronto City Hall. In each of the coming years, the city plans on adding another 1,000 post-and-ring bike stands on sidewalks as well as 100 more bike lockers. There are also plans for secure bike parking kiosks at subway stations.

The Greater Toronto Area has not been left out; it has benefited from the vastly expanded bike parking at the suburban rail stations of the Greater Toronto Transit Authority (GO Transit). Metrolinx, a regional transportation funding agency, has provided \$2.2 million for numerous racks and bike lockers at stations throughout the region. GO Transit is installing covered bike storage areas to provide better security and protection from the weather, which can be severe during Toronto's winters. At least half of GO Transit stations will have bike shelters by winter 2008-2009, with the rest to be installed by winter 2008-2010.

The City of Toronto amended its zoning bylaw in 1993 to require bike parking in all new residential and commercial buildings over 2,500 square meters to provide bike parking.

New parking standards for selected land uses (e.g. office, retail, residential) are currently under review by City staff. The City of Toronto has also developed “Guidelines for the Design and Management of Bicycle Parking Facilities.” It provides specific information that planners, developers and property managers can use to improve the quality of bicycle parking that is secured through the City’s development approval process. The guidelines will help new developments meet Official Planning policies standards and environmental targets of the Toronto Green Development Standard.

Bike Parking in Chicago

Although Toronto has been leading North America in bike parking for at least two decades, Chicago is rapidly catching up fast and, in some respects, may have even overtaken first place Toronto. BetweenFrom 1993 andto 2008, the City of Chicago installed more than 12,000 bike racks on public property (e.g., on sidewalks and in schools, parks, and transit stations) – more than any other city in the USA. As the number of people cycling in Chicago increases, so too does the popularity of bicycle parking. To meet the demand for new bike racks from the general public, aldermen, and business owners, 500 new bicycle racks are installed each year.

One of the City’s most impressive accomplishments is the Cycle Center in Millennium Park. The Cycle Center, which is easily accessed from the 18-mile Lakefront Trail and downtown Chicago, provides secure, indoor parking for 300 bikes. Convenient lockers, showers and towel service, bike rentals, bike repairs, and guided bicycling tours are also available.

Chicago’s zoning ordinance now requires the provision of bike racks for short-term parking as part of all new commercial, office, and multi-family residential, and institutional buildings, planned developments, and some commercial parking garages. The City will be training its staff to rigorously enforce these bike parking provisions and publicize the advantages of bike parking when issuing building permits. All applications for building permits must report the number of bike parking spaces provided.

Planning to include bicycle parking is one of the strategies a developer can choose to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification points and be designated asfor an environmentally friendly “green” building. A new initiative aims to help developers learn how to include bike parking in projects where LEED certification is sought, and the city’s “Green Permits” program rewards developers who obtain LEED certification with expedited building permits.

In order to integrate cycling with public transit, bike parking is available at 110 of the 124 CTA subway and elevated stations and at 50 of the 76 Metra suburban rail stations. In Chicago, indoor or sheltered bike parking is available at 83 CTA stations, more than any transit system in North America. That provides weather protection and greater security, since the indoor bike racks are often within sight of station attendants and passengers.

The current plan calls for more bike parking facilities at both CTA and Metra stations. The City is now installing sheltered parking facilities for 382 bikes at four CTA stations, all with special brighter lighting and located in highly visible locations to enhance security. Recently, the city received a \$400,000 grant to install bike shelters for 250 bicycles at five transit stations in 2010.

Conclusions

Northern European cities have a long history of providing extensive bike parking, and they have also been at the forefront of advances in the design of parking facilities to make them convenient, multi-functional, sheltered, secure, and integrated with public transport. Nevertheless, more and more North American cities have been learning from the successes of these European cities. Toronto and Chicago have surely been the leaders in this area, but San Francisco, Vancouver, Ottawa, Seattle, and Portland also provide examples of innovative, forward-thinking provisions for bike parking. North Americans can only hope that these pro-bike parking policies spread to as many other cities as possible!.

For more details and background reading, readers may consult the following two articles: "Making Cycling Irresistible," *Transport Reviews*, July 2008, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 495-528, accessible at: <http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/Irresistible.pdf> And "At the Frontiers of Cycling," *World Transport Policy and Practice*, December 2007, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 8-57, accessible at: <http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/pdf/wtpp13.3.pdf>

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