



Bicycles on Buses
at
City Bus Interchange
on
29 March 2007

PEDAL POWER ACT INC.

*'More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a
better community'*

Summary

During a weekday study of bicycles being carried on bike racks on ACTION 300 Series Intertown Route buses, 31 bicycles were observed in the five hour survey period.

The 31 bicycles counted was exactly the same total as last year. Given the small size of this sample it is difficult to state whether patronage has increased, decreased or remained unchanged but the service is still well used. Although it is difficult to estimate exactly the total number of bicycles carried on all 300 Series buses that day, we estimate that the number was between 40 to 60 which suggests over 200 bicycles for the week, and possibly as many as 300.

98 Intertown Series buses were counted in the study period, up from 92 last year. However the reliability of service (ie percentage of buses that are rack-equipped) at 84% has remained little changed (82% in 2006). This is disappointing as Pedal Power had earlier received written advice from the ACT Government that from December 2006 reliability of service would be 100% expect in cases of breakdowns.

Perception is reality when it comes to marketing, and the number of 300 Series buses without bike racks, no doubt, limits patronage. Since June 2006 when the ACT Budget was delivered the public image of ACTION buses has suffered due to cuts in bus services and this has probably also discouraged people from using the bike on buses service.

To increase patronage, all 300-series buses must be bike rack-equipped (barring unforeseen circumstances such as breakdowns).

Introduction and Methodology

On Thursday 29 March 2007 (and the year before, on 29 March 2006), Pedal Power ACT counted bicycles carried on bike racks on ACTION Intertown Route 300 Series buses at the City bus interchange. The two platforms used by these buses were observed from 7.00am to 9.00am, and from 4.00pm to 7.00pm. Every bicycle loaded, unloaded or carried through the interchange was recorded.

The study counted buses for five hours of ACTION's approximately 18 hour working weekday, and at only a single point on the Intertown Route. All 300 series buses that were not rack equipped were also recorded. As the counting was done only at the Civic interchange, bicycles carried from other interchanges but unloaded

at locations such as ACTEW House, ANU or the University of Canberra are not captured in the figures. For instance trips made between Belconnen and ANU would not be counted.

Weather conditions were overcast and cool, with a maximum temperature of 19 degrees, and no special events were happening in the city. The day of the study was a typical, if slightly cool, Canberra autumn weekday. In 2006, the weather was sunnier and warmer, around 26 degrees.

Findings

Bicycles Carried

On Thursday 29 March 2007 Pedal Power counted bicycles carried on bike racks on ACTION Intertown Route 300 Series buses at the Civic interchange from 7.00am to 9.00am, and from 4.00pm to 7.00pm. Every bicycle loaded, unloaded or carried through the interchange was recorded.

During the combined 5 hour study period, 31 bicycles were observed being loaded, unloaded, or passing through the interchange. This is exactly the same number as counted in 2006. Table 1 details the combined figures for each direction and counting period.

Table 1: Combined Count of Bicycles on ACTION buses, Civic interchange

	LOADED	UNLOADED	THROUGH	SUBTOTALS
SOUTHBOUND AM	2	1	0	3
NORTHBOUND AM	1	5	0	6
SOUTHBOUND PM	3	3	4	10
NORTHBOUND PM	5	6	1	12
SUBTOTALS	11	15	5	31
				GRAND TOTAL

Tables 2 to 5 detail the individual data collected for each direction and counting period. Only buses that carried bicycles are listed. In order to easily identify the specific buses, the times shown are the scheduled departure times of the buses according to the timetable.

Table 2: Southbound (Direction Belconnen to Tuggeranong) Morning Count

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UTHBOUND PLATFORM 1		BIKES COUNTED		
TIME (am)	ROUTE No	LOADED	UNLOADED	THROUGH
7.49	315	1		
8.04	312	1	1	
Subtotals		2	1	
Grand Total	3			

Table 3: Northbound (Tuggeranong to Belconnen) AM count

NORTHBOUND PLATFORM 4		BIKES COUNTED		
TIME (am)	ROUTE No	LOADED	UNLOADED	THROUGH
7.33	313	1	1	
7.39	312		1	
8.36	315		1	
8.40	300		1	
8.58	313		1	
Subtotals		1	5	
Grand Total	6			

Table 4: Southbound (Belconnen to Tuggeranong) PM count

SOUTHBOUND PLATFORM 1		BIKES COUNTED		
TIME (pm)	ROUTE No	LOADED	UNLOADED	THROUGH
4.10	117	1		
4.35	300		1	
4.39	314	1		
4.55	313			1
5.31	160			1
5.55	313	1	1	1
6.39	314			1
6.55	313		1	
Subtotals		3	3	4
Grand Total	10			

Table 5: Northbound (Tuggeranong to Belconnen) PM count

RTHBOUND PLATFORM 4	NO	BIKES COUNTED		
TIME (pm)	ROUTE No	LOADED	UNLOADED	THROUGH
4.01	312		1	
4.06	314		2	
4.11	300		1	
5.08	313	1		
5.30	313			1
5.38	312	1	1	
5.44	314	1		
6.34	313	1	1	
6.54	314	1		
Subtotals		5	6	1
Grand Total	12			

Proportion of Rack-Equipped Buses

The frequency of 300 Series bus services increased slightly but the reliability of service (ie number of buses that were bike-rack equipped) was largely unchanged. A total of 98 of the 300 Series buses were observed (93 last year) . Of these, 16 buses, or 16% of the total, were not equipped with bicycle racks (compared to 17 buses or 18% of the total in 2006). On three occasions, two consecutive non-equipped buses passed through the interchange in the same direction (two occasions last year).

Of the 82 rack-equipped buses observed, 23 (28%), carried at least one bicycle. In 2006, 27 out of the 76 rack-equipped buses (36%) carried at least one bicycle.

Table 6 details all 300 Series buses not equipped with bicycle racks. As above, times listed are scheduled departure times, rather than observation times.

Table 6: 300 Series Intertown Route Buses Not Equipped With Bike Racks

SOUTHBOUND		NORTHBOUND	
TIME	ROUTE	TIME	ROUTE
7.43am	313	8.14am	315
7.59am	314	4.15pm	315
8.23am	314	4.21pm	313
8.26am	312	4.46pm	314
8.52am	315	4.56pm	300
4.45pm	315	5.25pm	315
6.10pm	314	6.18pm	314
6.24pm	313	6.26pm	315

Note: Bold entries indicate services for which the previous service was also non-equipped with bicycle racks.

Discussion

As with last year, the study only counted buses for five hours of ACTION's approximately 18 hour working weekday, and at only a single point on the Intertown Route eg all those bicycles loaded and unloaded before or after Civic would not be counted

31 bicycles were counted, exactly the same total as last year. Given the small size of this sample it is difficult to state whether patronage has increased, decreased or remained unchanged but the service is still well used. Although it is difficult to estimate exactly the total number of bicycles carried on buses that day, we

estimate that the number was between 40 to 60 which suggests over 200 bicycles for the week, and possibly as many as 300.

98 Intertown Series buses were counted in the study period up from 92 last year. However the reliability of service (ie percentage of buses that are rack-equipped) at 84% is almost unchanged from last year (82% in 2006). This is surprising and disappointing. In 2006 the ACT Government wrote to Pedal Power and said that from December 2006 reliability of service would be 100% except in case of breakdown.

On three occasions, two consecutive non-equipped buses passed through the interchange in the same direction (two occasions last year) .

Perception is reality when it comes to marketing, and the number of 300 buses without bike racks, no doubt, limits patronage of the service. Since June 2006 when the ACT Budget was delivered the public image of ACTION buses has probably suffered due to cuts in bus services and this has probably also discouraged people from using the service.

Despite these perception difficulties, the fact the bike on bus service is still well-used probably partly reflects the intelligent choice of route. The Intertown 300 Series bus service is relatively frequent compared to other bus services and many people live within an easy 5 km bicycle ride of the route.

Similarly to 2006, a smaller number of bicycles arrived on southbound services in the morning and a greater number of bicycles carried on northbound services in the afternoon. This may reflect that Belconnen is uphill from Civic, and therefore more people are likely to cycle in the mornings and take the bus in the evenings. In comparison the Civic-Woden figures are similar in the morning and afternoon – this trip requires similar effort in either direction.

The bicycle racks are much more heavily used in the evening (nine bicycles carried in total in the morning versus 22 in the evening). This may reflect some commuters' aversion to cycling in the dark or after a tiring day at work. However, our data indicates that rack reliability problems are greatest in the evening, precisely when there is the most demand for racks.

Recommendation

Pedal Power recommends that to increase patronage, all 300 Series buses must be bike rack-equipped (barring unforeseen circumstances such as breakdowns).