

## ABERDEEN BUS STATION RAILWAY STATION FERRY PORT Interchange Audit

Susan Warren  
Jolin Warren  
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Linking cycling with  
public transport

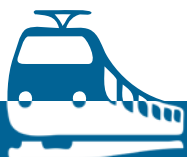


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## Introduction

### Purpose of the Interchange Audit

Transform Scotland has carried out a series of 'Interchange Audits' to assess how easy it is to combine cycling with other forms of sustainable transport. Railway stations, bus stations, and ferry terminals have been audited with consideration given both to cyclists who might want to park their bike and to those who plan to take their bike with them (for instance on the train or ferry). Each audit has involved an on-the-ground survey using the **Interchange Toolkit** which was developed for this project. The survey considers aspects that could make a cyclist's journey easier or more difficult, starting from the station or terminal approach, through entering, to locating parking or the appropriate boarding point. Features such as signage, suitable routes, and access to facilities have been included. However, the project did not assess cycle carriage (for example, the number of cycle spaces on a train or ferry).

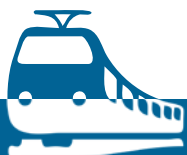


# overview of stations and terminal

The City of Aberdeen has a sustainable transport interchange hub where the railway station, bus station and ferry terminal are all within 700 metres of each other. These all are centred, more or less, around the Union Square retail/leisure hub, which provides access routes between the three facilities. Their proximity makes it possible to switch between rail, bus, and ferry with relative ease. Given the integrated nature of Aberdeen's public transport facilities, they are being considered in one report rather than three separate documents.

**Local authority area**  
Aberdeen City Council

**Location**  
In the city centre which is also adjacent to Aberdeen Harbour, a busy commercial port; including suburbs the city has a population of 201,680



## Aberdeen Railway Station

The only railway station in Aberdeen, Scotland's third largest city, is the fifth busiest station in Scotland (the busiest outside of Glasgow and Edinburgh). Services from Aberdeen Railway Station run north-west to Inverurie, Elgin and Inverness, and south to Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, and Penzance. It sees significant use as an interchange with 5% of passengers using the station to change trains. The multi-storey car park on College Street is partly run and maintained as a part of the station.

### Number of passengers

Used by 3.5 million passengers in 2012/13

### Station manager

ScotRail

### Number of entrances/exits

5

### Number of platforms

7

### Services

intercity (Scotland and UK), regional, sleeper (to London); less than ten trains per hour, primarily originating/terminating services with a few through services

References: Mid-2010 Populations Estimates for Settlements and Localities in Scotland (General Records Office Scotland); Estimates of Station Usage 2012/13 (Office of Rail Regulation); National Rail Enquires; Aberdeenshire Council, Stagecoach Bluebird Aberdeen

## Aberdeen Bus Station

There are regional and national services within Scotland and the UK provided by Stagecoach, First, Megabus and National Express which call at Aberdeen Bus Station. Stagecoach Bluebird carries bicycles on all their services.

## NorthLink Ferry Terminal

The NorthLink Ferry Terminal provides services to and from Lerwick (Mainland Shetland) and Kirkwall (Mainland Orkney). Northbound and southbound journeys to Shetland run seven days a week. Connections to Orkney are provided four days a week northbound and three days a week southbound. Ferry customers will almost certainly be 'through' travellers taking their bicycles onto the ferry, while NorthLink staff are 'to' travellers, only using their bicycles to get to the terminal building.

## Audit Summary

### Key Issues Found

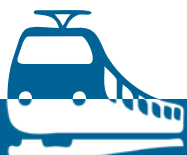
A general issue across the area was that while some good cycle parking existed, it was often not in desired locations, was poorly signed, was poorly maintained, or was (perceived as) unsafe. There was also a lack of secure parking in the form of public cycle lockers. While there were good routes between and into the stations and ferry terminal, a lack of consistent signage meant that cyclists might not know about the best routes available.

### NorthLink Ferry Terminal

NorthLink was very accommodating to cyclists, allowing bicycles to be brought into the terminal building and with staff assisting cyclists at key points of the route onto the ferry. Staff also keep an eye out for cyclists who arrive and are unsure what to do with their bicycles. However, signage could be improved as the lack of cycle-specific signage or parking outside the terminal means that a first time traveller would be unsure as to where they should go and where they can leave or take their bicycle. When disembarking the ferry, there was also a lack of signage indicating how to get to the railway or bus stations, or the nearby National Cycle Routes.

### Aberdeen Railway Station

There was a lack of well-located, quality, and safe cycle parking at the station, despite there being plenty of space. Where parking did exist in desired locations (outwith but near the station), it was oversubscribed, and so there was a clear demand for



more parking in suitable locations. Signage to nearby cycle parking outwith the station could also be improved. An audit of the cycles parked in the station (both to cycle stands and railings or posts) and the surrounding area should be conducted to identify where cyclists desire parking and where more can be installed.

## Aberdeen Bus Station

The bus station provides good cycle parking but no lockers for public use. Additionally, the nearby cycle parking was not signposted. More importantly, Aberdeen Bus Station has some of the few bus services in Scotland which carry bicycles, yet there was no signage to indicate this or where cyclists should wait. Staff at the station were also unaware of the bicycle carriage on Stagecoach Bluebird services and so could not help direct cyclists appropriately.

## Future Plans

### NorthLink Ferry Terminal

There are plans to include further cycling information on the NorthLink website. Additionally, NorthLink will look into carrying the Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 1 maps in their ships' on-board shops and display cycling information on their on-board electronic information screens. There is also a plan for the Aberdeen Cycle Forum to produce a map for those cyclists who arrive in Aberdeen in the morning and wish to have a short ride prior to leaving on the ferry in the evening.

### Aberdeen Railway Station

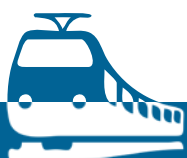
While station staff during the audit mentioned a plan to install cycle parking near the glass wall separating the Blue Badge Parking Area and the main concourse (which would be an excellent location), this could not be confirmed by ScotRail at the time of writing.

### Aberdeen Bus Station

There was, at time of writing, no information on future plans for Aberdeen Bus Station in terms of cycling facilities.

## Conclusions

Aberdeen has a special opportunity to be a cycling destination as well as a point from which to travel. The basic infrastructure is in place in terms of the location of the stations and ferry terminal, access routes, and cycle parking availability in the surrounding area. Aberdeen is also in the envious and unusual position of having bus services which carry bicycles as a matter of policy. Yet this provision is currently let down by a lack of consistent signage integrated across the facilities, a lack of information about travelling with a bicycle on the buses, and insufficient and poor quality cycle parking at the railway station. For Aberdeen's sustainable transport hub to achieve its potential, there will need to be a combined effort between the council and transport companies. They will need to ensure that all routes are well marked and that good quality cycle parking is available and well signposted. The information on taking bicycles on buses must also be improved. With some effort and coordination, Aberdeen could be a model for a sustainable transport interchange.





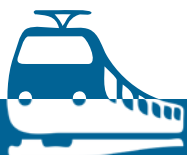
## Signage

### NorthLink Ferry Terminal

- ▶ The ferry terminal was well signposted from all approaches although none of the signs had cycle specific markings. This was not inherently a problem but worth noting simply from the perspective that there were clear pedestrian signs to the terminal.
- ▶ The lack of clear signage could mean that a cyclist is unsure where and how to engage, given the clear markings for other modes of transport.
- ▶ The ferry terminal entrance had no cycle signage, so it was unclear whether cyclists can bring their bicycle into the main ticketing area or not. While it is NorthLink policy for staff to make a point of seeking to help a cyclist if they see one looking about outside, a clear indication that cyclists are free to come in with their bicycles would be useful.
- ▶ Upon exiting the terminal there was no sign to the railway or bus station for any vehicle at the junction of Ferry Terminal Road and Market Street. There was also no indication of how to access National Cycle Route 1 and National Cycle Route 195.

### Aberdeen Railway Station (including College Street Car Park)

- ▶ There were no signs in the area around the taxi and Blue Badge Holder entrance from Civic Square indicating whether bicycles were allowed to use this entrance. This was not ideal as it was the only entrance/exit by which a cyclist could cycle in or out of the station.
- ▶ Upon exiting the station, the National Cycle Routes 1 and 195 were well sign-posted.
- ▶ The walking area between the Travel Centre and Blue Badge holder parking in the station had a sign which offered information on where to find most things, but not cycle parking.
- ▶ There was no indication at the main entrance to the College Street Car Park that cycle parking was available in this car park, either in the form of lockers or Sheffield stands. There was only one sign indicating the cycle parking on level 5 inside the entire car park.



## Aberdeen Bus Station and Union Street Shopping Centre

- ▶ The cycle parking area on the south side of Union Square (under the ramp to the car park, near TK Maxx) was not sign posted.
- ▶ The cycle parking outside the Union Square Shopping Centre at the Bus Station was also not sign posted.
- ▶ While all Stagecoach Bluebird buses will carry bicycles, there was no signage indicating this, or where cyclists should wait. Compounding the problem, staff at the bus station seemed unaware that any bus services carried bicycles.

## Cycle Parking



## NorthLink Ferry Terminal

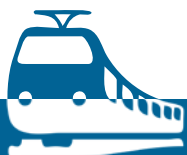
- ▶ There was no cycle parking at the ferry terminal.
- ▶ The two options for cyclists travelling on the ferry prior to boarding were:
  - Bicycles could be locked up in NorthLink Ferry's secure holding area. This was at the owner's own risk but provided more security than leaving them outside. However, once the bicycles were in this area, there was no access to them until boarding time.
  - Bicycles could be locked up outside the terminal (on fencing) or at the cycle parking provided at Union Square.
- ▶ There were no lockers but cyclists could place panniers in the left luggage inside the ferry terminal building.
- ▶ There was a clear need for cycle parking for staff, as there were two staff bicycles locked to the fence outside the terminal.

## Aberdeen Railway Station

- ▶ There are five Sheffield stands in the Blue Badge holder parking area of the station (near the wall backing on to Guild Street). These stands and surrounding area were very dirty and dark, with water dripping from the roof. Surveillance was very poor, with little to no natural surveillance of the area and no CCTV. Possibly as a result of these conditions, none of the stands were in use.
- ▶ There are left luggage lockers at the station.

## College Street Car Park (for Aberdeen Railway Station)

- ▶ At the main entrance to the College Street Car Park, there were four bicycle lockers, three of which had their lock loop broken off. One locker has been repaired (most likely by the user).



- ▶ At Level 5 of the College Street Car Park, there were 35 Sheffield stands with only four bicycles parked, three of which looked abandoned. There were three left locks. CCTV had recently been installed but natural surveillance was low and this area has a history of bike theft according to local contacts. This, along with the distance from the station, were considered the most probable reasons for its underuse.
- ▶ Near the exit ramp from College Street Car Park, on the station level, there were two Sheffield Stands with several bicycles attached to railings. One bicycle, according to a local contact, had been abandoned for at least 8 months. This was clearly a desired parking area.
- ▶ On College Street, near the main entrance to the Car Park there were four empty Sheffield stands, without a cover. CCTV was present at the location, but it was unclear if it covered the cycle parking.

## Union Square (including the Civic Square in front)

- ▶ The Civic Square station entrance had 10 Sheffield stands, five of which were covered. All had good natural surveillance and CCTV coverage. The stands and area around the stands was well kept and clean. The stands were well used, particularly at the weekends.
- ▶ On the south of Union Square under the ramp to the car park (near TK Maxx) there were 14 Sheffield stands with good spacing. While CCTV did not cover the cycle parking, the area did have lighting and some element of good natural surveillance. The steps on the northern approach towards the parking area did not have a wheel well while the southern approach had level access.

## Aberdeen Bus Station

- ▶ There were six bicycle lockers at the bus station, but they were provided only for staff use.
- ▶ The bus station provided 12 covered Sheffield stands and 14 bicycles were parked at the time of the audit. It was not clear if the CCTV cameras present in the vicinity covered the stands. There was good footfall and therefore excellent natural surveillance.

## Suitable Routes

### NorthLink Ferry Terminal

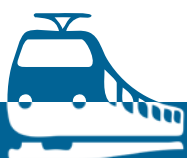
- ▶ The route to and from the ferry was always facilitated by staff located at key points on-route. Cyclists must walk their bicycles on and off the ferry. The staff were also available to assist cyclists in securing their bikes on the boat when boarding.

### Aberdeen Railway Station/College Street Car Park

- ▶ The Civic Square taxi and Blue Badge Holder entrance was where cyclists could ride into or out of the station. This was satisfactory to negotiate, but could be difficult when the station becomes busy, as there is no clear cycle path or right of way.
- ▶ The route to Platform 7 had a small lift and only one bicycle (no longer than 179cm) would fit in here at an angle. There were no wheel wells on the stairs. However, Platform 7 did have ticket barriers suitable for cyclists to use.
- ▶ All other platforms were accessed by the ticket gates in the main concourse, which had level access. The ticket barriers had two large gates suitable for bicycles to pass through.

### Aberdeen Bus Station

- ▶ While all Aberdeen Stagecoach Bluebird buses take bicycles (according to their information phone line called 19 June 2014), there was no special provision at the stance (like extra room) for bicycles.





## Facilities

### NorthLink Ferry Terminal

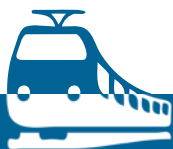
- ▶ While there was no parking for bicycles, cyclists were able to bring bicycles into the building and lean them against a wall in order to access the ticket desk and lavatories.

### Aberdeen Railway Station

- ▶ When using the ticket office a cyclist could take their bike in with them or use the convenient parking in Civic Square.
- ▶ In the railway station there were no cycle parking options close to the cafés and refreshments. WH Smith was too small to accommodate a bicycle. The cafés did not allow customers to bring in their bicycles. Instead, they suggested cyclists lean their bicycles against the glass windows outside the café, so that owners could keep an eye on them while eating.

### Aberdeen Bus Station

- ▶ The cycle parking was convenient for access to the bus station ticket office and all the refreshment options in Union Square.



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scotland

[transformscotland.org.uk/interchange](https://transformscotland.org.uk/interchange)

Tel: +44 (0)131 243 2690

[info@transformscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@transformscotland.org.uk)