



27 April 2017

CB(4)948/16-17(04)

Dear Transport Panel member

**Bicycle carriage on MTR trains
Please reject the wheel removal proposal**

Greetings from Hong Kong Cycling Alliance.

We note that you are a member of the Legco Transport Panel, of which the **Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways** will tomorrow (Friday) consider the MTRC's review of its by-laws (Cap. 556B), including those relating to passengers with bicycles ([agenda](#)).

MTRC proposes to model revisions to the by-laws regarding the carriage of bikes on MTR services on the provisional arrangement in place since 2011. (See p45 of LC Paper No. [CB\(4\)890/16-17\(07\)](#))

Much of this we welcome, but would like your support for one small but important adjustment.

I know that you may already be familiar with cycling matters, but may I briefly recap the present situation?

Carriage of bikes on MTR train services – as we are

In December 2011, at the regular biannual meeting between cycling advocacy groups and government departments, MTRC announced that bicycles could henceforth be carried on all lines, seemingly a transportation policy fit for 21st-century Hong Kong, encouraging the sensible combination of bike and train travel. HKCAI and others stood ready to heap on the plaudits.

However, the gain was spoiled by the Corporation then having staff ask passengers to dismantle the front wheel of their bikes and carry the pieces – an especial burden on anyone not in prime health or owning the latest model of bike, an inconvenience for all, and no benefit to anyone.

The reasoning behind the restriction has never been clear, with a variety of justifications offered, by senior officers and customer service, as well as frontline staff, who have been left to make up their own explanations, in the absence of clear logic from headquarters.

Globally, the request to undo the front wheel is rare or unique among urban/suburban rail operators rail operators. Unsurprisingly.

Why is taking a wheel off such a bad idea?

Some reasons why bicycles are best transported whole:

1. Creating two or more pieces of luggage out of one is a needless additional inconvenience.
2. A whole bike is easy for the passenger to control, and can be moved to allow other passengers to pass when necessary. Whereas a separated wheel may fall and roll, such as onto the tracks or down stairs.
3. the exposed forks are a sharp point that might accidentally stab other people.
4. The process of taking a wheel off is inconvenient at best, a waste of that passenger's time and a possible hindrance to others. And then again to refit the wheel.
5. After dismantling, neither brake is effective, reducing control of the largest portion of the bike
6. Many bicycles – especially traditional designs, used for everyday local transport – cannot easily be disassembled, effectively preventing some people (non-sporty, older, less well-off) from using the service.
7. Parents with young children can look after them when each is pushing their bike. By imposing wheel removal on a family with bikes, the adult is likely to have either an impossible amount of loose metal to carry, or a risk that their child may suffer or cause harm by being burdened with separated pieces of bicycle.
8. the shape and safety of forks is dependent on the wheel being in place. When exposed, they are more easily damaged, which may be costly for high-end lightweight bikes, and/or dangerous if it affects the subsequent handling of any bike in use.
9. A complete bike is like any other wheeled luggage, of which various kinds are uneventfully carried on the MTR all the time, so why should wheel removal be required for some and not others? This is not fair.
10. The suggestion that separated pieces of a bike take up less space isn't even true! When the wheel is removed from within the forks and placed alongside the bike, the volume is very similar.
11. Wheel fixings and especially brakes will sometimes not be properly reassembled, especially by youngsters and inexperienced riders, making a subsequent serious or even fatal accident more likely when the bike is ridden.

So why might MTRC want the wheel removed?

1. Convenience of other passengers? Kept whole, the bike is easy to control; in pieces causes the greatest inconvenience
2. Safety – the dismantled bike introduces significantly more risks. Whole, it's just a bike, it doesn't bite!
3. Compliance with general luggage requirements – it is sometimes wrongly implied that bikes without a wheel would meet the dimension requirements for luggage (eg. L+W+D must be no more than 170 cm), when in fact no regular bike can, given their basically flat form. Bikes were always an exception to

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the baggage dimension limits, and rightly so, given the environmental, health, economic and mobility benefits that bikes bring to society.

4. The bike might roll down the length of the train – yes, this was actually suggested by a station manager who wasn't very good at physics.
5. Passengers with bikes may jump on them and ride around. It is a gross calumny to suggest that anyone with a bike is inherently more irresponsible than everyone else and needs to be restrained. But this is put forward as justification by both senior and frontline staff, and may even be at the root of this whole requirement.

We note that MTRC proposes a rule that bikes may not be ridden on MTR property, which we support. This takes care of point 5, above, and perhaps resolves the whole matter, so that bikes can now be taken conveniently into and out of stations .

Summary

Among users of MTR services who have carried bikes there is widespread criticism of the present provisional arrangement requiring wheel removal, and any regularisation into the by-laws would not only leave them frustrated and disappointed at the unnecessary danger and inconvenience, but would expose Hong Kong to ridicule as the law became more widely known.

Encouragement and promotion of environmentally friendly travel for all is a responsibility of public transport operators, and especially the MTR with its central role in Hong Kong's transport policy.

By offering merely restricted carriage of bikes, MTRC is not only missing the opportunity to serve the public better, and gain appreciation for it, but also short-changing Hong Kong by holding back the development of cycling as a local and tourist industry that would spread economic activity more evenly across the territory.

Thank you for your support in addressing these points at tomorrow's meeting.

regards

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