



SHOPPING CENTRED CYCLE TRAINING

a Southwark Cyclists project
funded by Transport for London's Cycle London Promotion Partnership
with the support of Surrey Quays Shopping Centre

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SHOPPING CENTRED CYCLE TRAINING



Introduction

“Lots of London adults and children want to cycle more, but simply don’t know how: they can’t ride a bike, or don’t know how to get that bike in the shed back on the road, or are worried about heavy motor-traffic. Southwark Cyclists decided to test-market cycle-training to a very specific non-cycling audience ... all those shoppers arriving by car at Surrey Quays Shopping Centre.”

Barry Mason, Southwark Cyclists.

Surrey Quays Shopping Centre is in Rotherhithe, south-east London. It serves a local population which has grown rapidly in recent years following the redevelopment of the docks. It is accessible by tube, bus, bike and foot, but the approach to the centre is dominated by its large car parks (holding 1400 cars). With enthusiastic support from the management of the shopping centre, Southwark Cyclists successfully applied to Transport for London for a £5,000 Cycle London Promotion Partnership grant.

The scheme offered shoppers up to three hours of customised one-to-one cycle training by professional trainers from Cycle Training UK. The subsidy from TfL meant that a training session which would normally cost up to £82.50 was available for a nominal fee of £10. The cycle training offer was promoted with the help of a one-day ‘Bike Magic’ event on 24 August 2006.

3,850 postcards giving details of both the Bike Magic Day and the training offer were placed on cars in the Surrey Quays Shopping Centre car parks on four separate days. In addition, 500 postcards were left in the nearby branch of Decathlon (a large sports shop which offers a cycle repair service).

Twenty people called Cycle Training UK to book training.

surrey quays
bike magic day

FREE!

- > RJ Rideguide: possibly the UK's best stunt riders at 12 noon, 2pm, 4pm and 6pm
- > Easy local bike rides at 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm
- > Dr Bike's free cycle surgery for those minor problems
- > Cycle training on demand and all sorts of advice

thursday 24 august, 11am-7pm

AMAZING CYCLE TRAINING OFFER!

save up to £72.50!

the offer

Love to learn how to ride a bike? You and the bike a bit rusty? Not sure what bike to get? Need to get your bike on the road? Want to improve your cycling skills? Easy! Phone Cycle Training UK on 020 7582 3535. Friendly expert training to your door. This unrepeatable offer gets you up to 3 hours of professional cycle training and advice for a flat fee of only £10 - payable on booking. That's a massive saving thanks to Southwark Cyclists and Transport for London. Places limited. First come, first served.

lots of rides and more year round from Southwark Cyclists!
www.southwarkcyclists.org.uk

Transport for London
Southwark Cyclists

Bike Magic Day

The Bike Magic Day included:

- four shows by RJ Rideguide, one of the UK's best stunt mountain bike riders
- four easy guided rides around the local area
- a free 'Dr Bike' clinic which checked 60 bikes and carried out basic repairs
- stalls from Green Going and Cycle Training UK providing leaflets, on-the-spot training and advice
- local police registering bikes with anti-theft markers
- an unusual 'Christiana' trike from Velorution cycle shop to try



explaining the cycle training offer



looking at TfL cycle maps



a trike to transport shopping or toddlers

booking an appointment with 'Dr Bike'



ready to head off on a guided ride





RJ Rideguide spins ...

Rich Johnson's breathtaking performances drew large crowds and rapt attention. Sam Johnson distributed attractive cycle-safety items such as fluorescent bands and water bottles (provided by Good Going) to the cheering crowd and promoted the cycle training offer.



...hops from bar to bar on Sheffield bike stands and then does it all again – backwards



the high jump ... followed by the limbo

Trainee 1: Looking good

Anamica is a student and lives near the shopping centre

I picked up lots of leaflets and useful information at the Bike Magic Day, and I also went on a group cycle ride, which was nice. We went through Southwark Park and along the riverside and then back to the shopping centre. There was a good atmosphere, with a range of people, old and young. Cycle instructors rode at the back and the front of the group, so I felt looked-after and safe the whole time. The riverside can be difficult to cycle along because there are steps at various points, so it was useful to be shown short cuts and ways round. I don't cycle that often for pleasure, so it's nice to learn about these routes.



My one-to-one training started in Southwark Park, where we went through the basic skills: stopping, starting, swerving. There were lots of things I hadn't really thought about. I realised I wasn't really looking behind me as I should. We went on to signalling and by the time we got out onto the road the session was nearly over.

I learnt about looking: looking into roads as you ride past, and continuing to look as you make a turn. In the past I would just look once – rather vaguely. Now I make a point of looking and I feel more confident.

My partner cycles a lot and he likes to go out on long rides with me. He leads the way, and we have sometimes ended up on really busy roads. It's been fine, but I don't feel that confident. Although I drive and I know the Highway Code, it's different on a bike. It's quite hard to negotiate with drivers and to know what to do at junctions.

I didn't make as much progress as I wanted to. The basic skills were really helpful, but I needed another session to work on road skills. I could have booked another session but it's quite expensive. I'd be willing to pay for it if I was earning a lot, but I'm studying at the moment. I guess I'd pay £20 -£25 at the most.

While I was out with the cycle trainer, someone came up to us asking for a leaflet. People who know about cycle training and want it will seek it out. I didn't know about it – I would have loved to get a leaflet through the door. The shopping centre was a good place to publicise the training as everyone who lives round here does at least some of their shopping there. But lots of people go on foot, or even by bike, so I'm not sure that putting postcards on cars was the best way to reach people. In fact my partner nicked our postcard from a car windscreen!

*“Now I make a point of looking
and I feel more confident.”*

Trainee 2: An eye-opener

Marie lives in East Dulwich. She read about the Surrey Quays project in London Cyclist magazine.

I used to ride into town 3-4 times a week, into London Bridge, Waterloo and the West End, or in the other direction, along the South Circular out to Catford. But I've had quite a few accidents. In the last one, someone suddenly turned left without indicating and I ended up with a hairline fracture in my hip, which needed a lot of physiotherapy. It had an effect on me, and I wasn't cycling as much.

The training was a very, very positive experience. I really enjoyed it – and more importantly, it completely changed the way I cycle. It was an eye-opener. I'd been cycling dangerously for ten years.

I met Vicky, the instructor in the local park, and we started off with control skills, starting and stopping. Vicky was wearing a big yellow jacket with Cycle Training written on it and I thought, 'I'm 49, I've been cycling on and off for ten years – I feel like a school kid!' But I didn't realise just how appallingly I cycled. I thought 'emergency stop' just meant putting on the brake – which would explain why I fell off the last time I tried that!

Then we went out on the road. I thought of myself as a law-abiding cyclist – I also drive, and I apply the same principles to cycling. I cringe when I see cyclists going through red lights or mounting the pavement. But I realised that I had been an absolute danger – to myself and to others. For example, I had always cycled on the inside of buses because I thought that was what was expected. Vicky made me promise never to do it again! I'd seen other cyclists doing it, and just followed them, assuming it was the right thing to do.

I'd never felt assertive enough to cycle in the middle of the lane – it felt like an arrogant thing to do. In fact it's a lot better to do that – drivers can see you. Of course, you get the odd one that honks... I can't understand why cyclists are so hated. There's a feeling that we shouldn't be there. But we are making life better for drivers and their children!

At the moment I'm practicing what I learned from Vicky: keeping my hands over the brakes at all times, sitting back in the seat, riding in the middle of the lane. When I've absorbed all that, I'll book some more training for help in dealing with main roads and roundabouts.

I was very impressed by the whole process – from the enthusiasm of the very first person I spoke to, right down to the instructor, who was excellent. They were all so committed – their hearts were really in it. Before the training I would have said 'I'm an experienced cyclist'. But I was doing these really stupid things which I thought were normal. I'd recommend cycle training to anyone, even if they've been cycling for twenty years.

“It was an eye-opener. I'd been cycling dangerously for ten years.”

The shopping centre manager's view

Ian Moore, Surrey Quays Shopping Centre Manager

'We often put on events to attract people to the centre in the hope that they will enjoy themselves and go on to do some shopping. The Bike Magic Day went very well and I'd be happy to repeat it. The stunt riders provided a great visual display that drew people in.

We chose an area of the car park near Decathlon, the bike shop, but perhaps another time we'd put the event on in a more prominent spot. A separate area was cordoned off for training, a little way away from the crowds so that trainees wouldn't feel overlooked, but not many people took this up on the day. On the other hand, a lot of the kids who came along had their own bikes. Perhaps on another occasion we could set up a mini obstacle course for them to demonstrate their skills. It might be a way to get them more involved.

I suppose if I think back to my own daughter learning to ride, it was a question of going to the park and running along beside her holding onto to the seat. You don't necessarily think of learning to cycle as something that needs professional training. And if your children can already ride a bike, you might wonder what the point of the training was. The same issue arises with car-drivers – most drivers think they are better than average, but most of us would benefit from extra lessons, especially the sort that lead to the advanced driving test.

The provision of cycle stands for staff and shoppers at the centre is pretty good and staff can also use cycle stands in a more secure area inside the service yard. Ideally, in a newly built centre, we'd offer showering facilities and lockers.

Eastgate Shopping Centre in Basildon has set up a great scheme offering the free loan of a bicycle – initially just to staff, but eventually to be extended to the public. There are lovely country parks around Basildon and the idea is that people might go for a ride in their lunchhour. I've been thinking about how we might introduce a similar scheme here, perhaps in collaboration with Decathlon.'



A crucial link in the chain: shopping and cycling

Southwark Cyclists based this cycle promotion project in a shopping centre in order to reach a large number of non-cyclists. The Bike Magic day offered lots of encouragement and ideas for cycling for pleasure, and this is an essential first step in considering other reasons for cycling, such as commuting and shopping. But is there a case for making a stronger link between shopping and cycling? This section summarises some recent research.

Cycling – the benefits for shopping centres

Retailers greatly underestimate both the number of non-motorist customers and the economic contribution they make (Sustrans, 2006). A survey carried out among 1,200 consumers in Bern established the ratio between the value of purchases made and the parking area used by each customer, showing that ‘the ratio of profitability to parking was highest in the case of cyclists: 7,500 euros per square metre. Motorists came next with 6,625 euros per square metre.’ (European Commission, 1999). Research in Germany suggested that cyclists are ‘better customers’:

‘Because they buy smaller quantities each time they go, cyclists go to shops more regularly (11 times a month on average, as opposed to seven times a month for motorists) and are thus exposed more often to temptation.’ (European Commission, 1999)

Recent research in Bristol by Sustrans revealed a similar pattern of retailers underestimating the importance of cyclists. The report concluded that although ‘it is traditional for retailers to pursue more car access and parking, and to resist measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport use’, ‘retail vitality would be best served by traffic restraint, public transport improvements, and a range of measures to improve the walking environment.’ (Sustrans, 2006) Such improvements would also make cycling more attractive.

Combining cycling and walking with delivery services

In general, people do not travel long distances for food shopping. Over 65% of such trips are less than 2 miles, and so ideal for cycling. However, busy working lives and the decline in local high streets, with many neighbourhoods having poor access to fresh goods, have contributed to the routine of a weekly supermarket shop.

A car seems essential for a bulky weekly shop, but in London, 37% of households do not have a car, while nationally ‘63% of households in the lowest income quintile do not own a car and make 58% of their journeys on foot’ (Transport 2000, 2004).

‘Transport is a critical factor to improving shopping access. Often public transport serving deprived neighbourhoods is poor, car ownership is low and people on low incomes have to rely on mini-cabs or taxis to get them to and from the nearest supermarket.’ (Department of Health, 2000)

Women and the elderly have lower access to cars and are more likely to rely on walking and public transport for their shopping trips. When a typical journey from bus-stop to the centre of a housing estate is considered, the distance that shopping has to be carried can be quite considerable. Cycling could be part of the answer to the problem of affordable transport, making it possible to reach shops and other services in a wider area at minimal cost. Some investment in infrastructure such as secure bike storage or cycle pools on housing estates would be helpful in making this possible.

In her study, *A Geographical Investigation of Travel for Food Shopping* (1996) Sally Cairns shows that a shift to delivery services for bulky items would have significant implications for reducing car use overall, with a positive impact on health and the environment. In the ten years since this study, food delivery services have become much more common. By using a delivery service for bulky items, shoppers can walk or cycle to choose and purchase fresh goods, to window-shop and enjoy the social aspects of shopping. This is the type of 'pleasurable' shopping that large retailers are keen to encourage. At the same time, the increased mobility of shoppers using bikes might contribute to the viability of small specialist shops in a wider area.

Cycling for 'vitality and viability' of shopping centres

The Good Transport Guide (1999) produced by the British Council of Shopping Centres noted that it was Government policy to quadruple the numbers cycling in 1996 by 2012. In most of the centres surveyed, cycles were used for less than 3% of trips for shopping. However, in this survey, shopping centre managers, local authority and highway authority managers, ranked cycle improvements as a low priority in comparison to other transport improvements such as Park and Ride schemes. Secure cycle parking was seen as the most important cycle-related improvement while cycle training was seen as a low priority, probably reflecting the lack of knowledge about cycle training in the general population. Where improvement to cycle provision has been made, as in Leicester, it is 'believed to be adding to vitality and viability' of the town centre.

Companies reducing their carbon footprint

Companies – along with the individuals and communities they serve – suffer as a result of heavy traffic. The Confederation of British Industry has calculated that congestion in the London area costs up to £20 billion per year in production and time lost. In January 2007, Marks & Spencer announced a £200m green initiative with a pledge to become 'carbon neutral' by 2012. The plan includes actions such as increasing the use of recycled materials and local and regional food, reducing packaging, and powering stores using renewable energy. Other big retailers such as Tesco and J Sainsbury have launched their own environmental initiatives. Such projects should also include investment in cycling infrastructure (such as secure parking, pool cycles and equipment) and support for staff and customers choosing sustainable transport.

'Cyclists enjoy better physically and psychological health, so companies whose staff cycle benefit from greater productivity.' (European Commission, 1999)

Making it possible for staff to cycle

A report produced by the Department of Transport, *Making Travel Plans Work*, surveyed 20 organisations which have adopted green travel plans. (Interestingly, cycle training is again not widely promoted and is mentioned only twice: 'no demand'; 'has not yet been taken up by any staff'.) The report contains useful case-studies of cycling as part of a green strategy.

At the Boots headquarters in Nottingham there is an active Bike Users Group. All who join are given a free reflective jacket; a 12% discount at Halfords. Two pool bikes and loan equipment (bikes, lights, pumps) are available to 'get you home'. The organisation is affiliated to the CTC so staff benefit from free insurance.

Another model is provided by Nottingham City Hospital, which has a fleet of 12 staff bikes maintained on contract by Raleigh. Staff also have access to equipment such as lights, locks, baby seats, helmets and car racks, and a 20% reduction on buying equipment from Raleigh.

Bluewater, an out-of-town shopping centre, has worked with Sustrans and Kent County Council to improve cycle and walking access. All the Bluewater green transport initiatives were brought together under the heading of TravelSense[®]: all staff were encouraged to register with this scheme (and it was a requirement if they wished to have a parking permit), giving details of their travel route. They were able to express an interest in car-sharing,

and became eligible for various benefits. Similar measure are now being taken at a new shopping development owned by the same company in Solihull.

Store employees cycling to work would help to create the 'critical mass' of people cycling which makes it feel safe and 'normal'. Staff might also act as informal advocates for cycling initiatives such as training, by talking to customers about their experiences.

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Summary of budget

Expenditure

Design and printing of 5,000 flyers	£700
Leaflet distribution at Surrey Quays on 17/19/20 August	£168
Planning meetings	£112
Cycle Training UK staff at Bike Magic Day	£880
Other staff at Bike Magic Day	£140
CTUK training of new riders	£595
Southwark Cyclists project management	£280



Total cost £2,877

Donations in kind

Stunt Bike team paid for by Tesco	£900
Advertising in <i>Southwark News</i> paid for by Surrey Quays Shopping Centre	

Note

As a comparison, Company of Cyclists, a social enterprise based in York, charges £3395 for a one-day roadshow 'Get Cycling' which does not include any training.

Recommendations for future shopping-centred cycle projects



1. Focus on the location

Why hold a promotional event at a shopping centre? If the aim is simply to promote cycling as fun or healthy, is the shopping centre the best place to reach children/parents/existing cyclists? Or is the event intended to encourage local people to consider shopping by bike? If so, how can this combination be made explicit?

2. Build connections

Link the event where possible to improvements in infrastructure both local (such as cycle routes) and shopping-centre based (such as provision of new secure parking, bike loan schemes etc.). Could a local bike shop lend cycles, panniers and baskets or offer help with maintenance? Could the local PCT be involved?

3. Target training

Parents who wouldn't consider training for themselves are often willing to invest in an activity for their children. Reach parents and grandparents by offering a 'family cycle training' package. This could include control and road skills, route-planning, an accompanied journey, and even the loan of panniers. On the other hand, leisure cyclists who don't yet use their bike to shop may need help planning a safe route from home, or to experience the freedom that panniers give by borrowing a pair for the day.

4. Publicity in advance

Publicise the idea of cycle training in as many different ways as possible, explaining what is involved and the potential benefits. People need to see the value of training before they will pick up any special offer. Advertising in local press might be accompanied by an article on cycle training, or interviews with successful trainees, showing the benefits for both adults and children. Leaflets could go to local schools and colleges, or could be very effectively distributed by advocates involved with local shops, businesses and voluntary organisations.

5. Publicity on the day

Wherever the event is sited, make sure that there is bold publicity on the day at all the entrances to the shopping centre. Balloons on bikes, clowns on bikes, sandwich boards...

6. Involvement

Think about more visually inviting ways for shoppers to get involved, such as:

- a mini obstacle course for children and young people. This might be as simple as a chicane of traffic cones, or a more elaborate layout with low ramps or even a miniature street with temporary traffic lights. Offer small prizes such as waterbottles and fluorescent strips, or vouchers for free cycle training from home.
- a quick, light-hearted Highway Code quiz for cyclists, drivers and pedestrians with small prizes.
- bikes to borrow in a range of sizes. Adults who haven't cycled since childhood can try a bike out for fun; trainers can discuss informally how to check that a bike is the right size, how to choose a suitable bike etc.
- competitions to guess how many items can be fitted into a pair of panniers or carried on a workbike.
- bringing in other cycle-related performances and demonstrations: circus skills (e.g. unicycles, trick cycles), health practitioners (e.g. blood sugar and heart rate monitors, advice on healthy living) or environmental campaigners (e.g. the interactive Energy Bike toured by Global Action Plan to show the relative energy consumption of different electrical appliances).

7. Follow up

Consider offering a discounted rate – somewhere between the promotional rate and the standard rate – for follow-up training booked by new trainees.

Conclusions

This joint project with the Surrey Quays Shopping Centre was a good initiative and it is to be hoped that it will lead to future collaborations between Southwark Cyclists and Surrey Quays Shopping Centre, and also to other local groups deciding to work on the link between shopping and cycling in collaboration with shopping centres and high street managers.

The Bike Magic Day was lively and well-attended. Although it is hard to measure the direct effect that such an event has on increasing the numbers cycling or frequency of journeys made by bike in the area, shoppers were seen to be enjoying themselves, talking about cycling and making use of Dr Bike and the information stalls. Interviews carried out on the day and afterwards showed that people were especially pleased with the advice and information available, the guided rides and the stunt rider's shows. The 'fair' type arrangement of stalls, performance attractions and chances to try out unusual bikes is ideal for a summer, family-friendly event. Southwark Cyclists brought together an impressive range of community, commercial and public sector organisations for the Bike Magic day, showing the effectiveness of local groups with established networks.

However, in terms of encouraging shoppers to take up the cycle training offer, the day was less successful. Volunteers leafleted cars on four separate days (at various times agreed with the shopping centre to reach the widest possible spread of shoppers) and handed out postcards to individuals on the Bike Magic Day. These combined efforts led to only 20 calls to book training.

Those who did take up the training found it very enjoyable and useful. The interviews with trainees reveal the immense value of personalised training – a small 'eye-opening' intervention that will have a life-long effect. The potential benefits are very wide: encouraging more cycling and making it more sustainable will have positive effects on the health and enjoyment of the individual and also on the wider environment. It is clearly worth subsidising this training as few of the trainees would have been able to consider it without the special rate.

So why did so few people take up this 'amazing' £10 offer? Anecdotal evidence suggests that people who have not experienced cycle training don't know what it involves, and can't see the point for themselves or their children. The bargain rate offered ('Save up to £72.50') is only meaningful if you are already aware of the usual cost of a three-hour training session, and a bargain is only motivating if you are already interested in the 'product' on offer.

The nominal £10 contribution towards the cost is important in establishing the value of the training and a commitment to it from the trainee. However, this might also be achieved in other ways, for example by giving out vouchers for subsidised or free training in return for participation in a mini-training session (or other activity) at the launch event.

How can more shoppers be persuaded of the value of training? Explaining what cycle-training involves and how it could improve the experience of cycling requires a more educational and individualised approach, whether in personal discussion or through well-written publicity. For a new or rusty adult cyclist, 'cycle training' is an unfamiliar notion. However, with the recent publicity given to cycle training for children through the Bikeability scheme, the notion may soon become more familiar. The offer needs to be more carefully targeted at particular groups, with appropriate editorial or publicity materials.

Training could even be offered as part of a themed 'package' with other items that seem more tangible and familiar: for example, a 'safe ride to the shops' package including a reflective vest, a local cycle map and two hours of training.

In conclusion, an urban shopping centre is an important place to bring activities aimed at non-cyclists. Making it possible for more people to cycle to the shops would have far-reaching effects on health and the environment. While further thought still needs to be given to the promotion of cycle training, events such as the Bike Magic Day are valuable in raising the profile of cycling among local people and providing access to resources and information.



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Surrey Quays Shopping Centre
www.surreyquaysshoppingcentre.co.uk

Transport for London
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Cycling Community Grants are awarded by the Cycle London Promotion Partnership (CLPP), formed of six key members including Transport for London (TfL), London Cycling Campaign (LCC), Cycling Tourist Club (CTC), Sustrans, LondonCycleSport, good going and the Association of London Government for the Boroughs.

Southwark Cyclists is one of London's busiest, most inclusive and innovative cycling groups. It's run entirely by volunteers and is open to all. They organise sociable and exploring rides all year round, work with Southwark Council and other official bodies to improve facilities for cyclists, fund-raise and organise cycle training for both children and adults.

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Report and photographs by Eleanor Margolies
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