

## **BMTS Article Digest July - August 2020**

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of [www.bmtsonline.com](http://www.bmtsonline.com).

Scott

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## **Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) Messenger e-Newsletter**

Go to <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/newsroom/newsletters.cfm>.

[Subscribe](#) to the new monthly PBIC Messenger. Send news for future issues to editorial team member [Linda Tracy](#).

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### **Come out and play in Broome County**

Go All Out Broome County is your simple guide to hundreds of places and thousands of acres in your own backyard or just down the road. Easily locate hidden gems and local favorites then map your next outdoor adventure in Broome County. Go to [www.GoAllOutBroome.com](http://www.GoAllOutBroome.com).



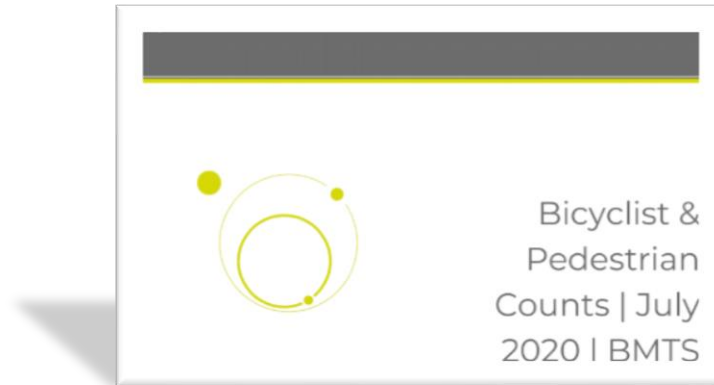
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See <http://bmtsonline.com/sites/default/files/July%202020%20Report.pdf>.



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Monday, 27 July 2020

## **Fatal crash: Vestal woman, 87, hit by car**

**Katie Sullivan Borrelli**

Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin USA TODAY NETWORK

An 87-year-old woman has died after she was struck by a car while crossing the street in the Town of Union on Saturday.

New York State Police and the Broome County Sheriff 's Office responded to Union Center Maine Highway (State Route 26) around 12:18 p.m.

Troopers said an investigation determined Nellie L. Smith, of Vestal, was attempting to cross the road when she was struck by a Toyota Sienna, driven by a 74-year-old Endicott woman, whose name has not been released.

Smith was pronounced dead at the scene.

An investigation is ongoing.

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## **Fit people, not cities, are protected from COVID-19**

**Jayne O'Donnell** USA TODAY

The annual ranking of the fittest U.S. cities, out Tuesday, tracks with some of the cities that weathered COVID-19 better – but the reverse is also often true.

The ranking underscores how cities can help or hinder residents' opportunities to be physically active, lose weight and avoid chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, which increase the risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 death rate for Arlington, Virginia, the nation's fittest city for the third year in a row, is 56 per 100,000 population.

Like most of the other Washington suburbs, Arlington had more cases per capita than more rural parts of the state. Indiana's Marion County, which includes 94th-ranked Indianapolis, has the highest number of cases and deaths in the state.

"We know from research that physical activity can build a healthier immune system and overall wellness, which help minimize harmful effects of illness and disease," said Barbara Ainsworth, chair of the American Fitness Index Advisory Board. "This pandemic shows the need to have local parks, trails and connected sidewalks in all neighborhoods that allow people to exercise safely."

Though fitness can help individuals ward off some of the virus's most dangerous effects, other factors play a big role in how susceptible a city becomes. An area's public health messaging, social distancing, use of mass transit and average number of people in a household all play a part, said Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease physician.

"No matter how fit a city is, there are going to be populations that aren't fit," said Adalja, a senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

The index, co-sponsored by the American College of Sports Medicine and the Anthem Foundation, uses 33 health behaviors, chronic diseases and community infrastructure indicators to come up with scores that rank the health of communities and those who live in them.

City leaders and planners need to enact policies and target funding to promote physical activity, better health and stronger communities, experts said.

That's especially true in cities with high populations of Black people and Hispanics, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, said NiCole Keith, ACSM's new president.

"COVID's negative health outcomes come from diseases that are positively impacted by physical activity," Keith said. "If you give people a place to be active, the likelihood they will do it is higher."

Only one in four Americans meets national physical activity guidelines, and more than 30 million have heart disease, Ainsworth said.

Sedentary lifestyles across cost more than \$117 billion a year in health costs in the U.S., Ainsworth said.

Though there were many bright spots in the findings, researchers found only 22% of adults in the 100 largest cities met the guidelines for aerobic and strength activities.

Adults need 150 minutes per week of moderately intense activity, or roughly 22 minutes per day, for substantial health benefits. On more positive notes:

- All cities: In all 100 cities, residents exercised and biked more, fewer smoked and there were more parks within a 10-minute walk this year compared with last.
- Big jumps: Some cities improved by at least 15 spots from 2019: Buffalo, New York (No. 25); Toledo, Ohio (No. 81); and Anchorage, Alaska (No. 37).
- Charlotte, North Carolina: Even though the city ranks 67th, ACSM credits the work business and community leaders have done since 2013 to prioritize healthy eating, physical activity and reducing tobacco use, all three Fitness Index indicators.
- New Orleans: Mayor Mitch Landrieu set a goal for the city to be one of the 10 fittest in the U.S. The Fit NOLA strategic plan targets healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco use, among others. The city is ranked 50th.

The index, in its 13th year, ranks cities instead of entire metropolitan areas to better capture the health disparities in urban areas. The health challenges facing low-income people in cities were getting offset by the healthier suburbs, Keith said.

**“COVID’s negative health outcomes come from diseases that are positively impacted by physical activity. If you give people a place to be active, the likelihood they will do it is higher.”**

**Nicole Keith** , ACSM president

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## **UPDATE: 77-year-old man walking his dog struck, killed on Route 12 in Norwich**

**Ashley Biviano**

July 15, 2020 - Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin

Officials say a man was walking his dog in an unlit stretch of Route 12 when he and his dog were struck and killed by a vehicle Monday night in Norwich.

New York State Police responded to the scene around 9:50 p.m. on Monday night to the accident, near Fred's Inn on Route 12.

Gary B. VanDusen, 77, Norwich, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Spokesperson Agnieszka Dembinska said VanDusen was walking a dog, which was also killed.

The operator of the vehicle, Tony L. Williamson, 45, Bainbridge, was traveling southbound when VanDusen and his dog were hit.

Williamson is cooperating with the investigation, police said.

The accident remains under investigation

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Stan Kauffman shared the following:

## I've Seen a Future Without Cars, and It's Amazing

Why do American cities waste so much space on cars?

By **Farhad Manjoo**, Opinion Columnist

July 9, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/09/opinion/sunday/ban-cars-manhattan-cities.html>

It's about how much space in NYC is reserved for cars and parking and how much better life would be there with turning that space into living and human-powered space.

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## 'Fix your bike' vouchers launch, as doctors to prescribe bikes on NHS



Image PA Media

**A government scheme offering £50 bike repair vouchers will launch in England on Tuesday as part of plans to boost cycling and walking.**

An initial 50,000 vouchers will be **made available online** later in the day on a first-come, first-served basis.

The prime minister also announced that bikes will be made available on the NHS as part of the strategy.

But Labour said many of the government's proposals were taking too long to come into effect.

It comes after the government **launched its obesity strategy on Monday.**

GPs in areas of England with poor health will be encouraged to prescribe cycling, with patients able to access bikes through their local surgery.

**Recent Public Health England research** found that being overweight or obese puts people at greater risk of serious illness or death from Covid-19.

Government statistics showed nearly 8% of critically ill patients in intensive care units with the virus have been morbidly obese, compared with 2.9% of the general population.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said cycling and walking have "a huge role to play" in tackling health and environmental challenges.

"But to build a healthier, more active nation, we need the right infrastructure, training and support in place to give people the confidence to travel on two wheels," he said.

"That's why now is the time to shift gears and press ahead with our biggest and boldest plans yet to boost active travel - so that everyone can feel the transformative benefits of cycling."

Former Olympic gold medal cyclist Chris Boardman, now a policy adviser to British Cycling, welcomed the plans.

"There's a quarter of households in Britain who don't have access to a car at all and we've got public transport operating at 30%, so 70% of people have got to find another way to travel or not go to work," he told BBC Breakfast.

"This can be not only provision for people who don't have a car now, it's a consultation for the future."

## **'Fix Your Bike' vouchers**

The government's "Fix Your Bike" vouchers are being released in batches "to help manage capacity" and so that the scheme can be monitored before being rolled out more widely, the government said.

They will typically cover the bill for a standard service and the replacement of a basic component such as an inner tube or cable.

During a Downing Street briefing in May, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the initiative would be "available from next month".

But the Department for Transport (DfT) said in July that it would only begin when maintenance shops could handle the expected spike in demand.

Halfords says it has thousands of slots available each day for customers to bring their bikes into stores to identify potential faults which could be rectified under the scheme.

"We think the government's 'Fix Your Bike' voucher scheme will not only help individuals become more confident about keeping their bikes maintained, but will help speed up the cycling revolution," said chief executive Graham Stapleton.

**The retailer previously reported that bike sales had risen by 57.1%** in the 13 weeks to 3 July, as people sought to avoid public transport during lockdown.

Thousands of miles of new protected cycle lanes, cycle training for children and adults, and the creation of the UK's first zero-emission transport city are also part of the plans to promote cycling and walking.

The initiative has been welcomed by cycling groups and environmentalists.

They have long argued that Active Travel - the new phrase for walking and cycling - fulfils twin objectives of improving health and well-being, while also reducing emissions that harm people's health and fuel climate change.

But they point out that the investment is less than a 10th of the £27bn that the government previously announced would be spent on new roads.

There's now increasing pressure for that road budget to be reduced.

AA head Edmund King told BBC News in April that **some of the cash might be better spent on improving broadband.**

And **environmentalists have brought a legal challenge against the plans** because the construction and use of the roads will increase carbon emissions when ministers are committed to reducing emissions.

**A recent study** suggested that big carbon savings can be made by constructing cycle lanes in suburbs, to be used by e-bikes.

### **'Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity'**

Other measures to improve the well-being of pedestrians and cyclists include strengthening the Highway Code, improving legal protections, increasing lorry safety standards and working with the police and retailers to tackle bike thefts.

The plans will be funded by a £2bn investment announced in February.

Mr. Shapps said it was a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a shift in attitudes" to make cycling or walking part of daily routines.

Matt Mallinder, director of the charity Cycling UK, said the plan "places cycling at the heart of our towns and cities", but he called for even more funding "to truly shift gears".

Kerry McCarthy, Labour shadow cycling minister also said that the Conservative party had "failed to seize the opportunity this crisis has posed".

"Although funding is welcome, cyclists will be rightly concerned about how long it is going to take to actually put these plans into practice."

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## Will Covid-19 make urban cycling more inclusive?



By Christine Ro 29th July 2020

### Cities don't cater to cyclists equally. Will the Covid-19 biking boom help create a more inclusive environment?

Cycling has flourished during Covid-19. Many people nervous about public transport or making greater use of their local areas have been getting around on two (or three) wheels. In the UK, some cycle shops have found it hard to **keep up with the demand**. In China, Beijing's bike-share system was used **150% more in March**, while cycling traffic in Dundee, Scotland **grew by 94% in April**.

Local governments have responded to the interest by carving out pop-up bike lanes in many cities **including Bogotá**. Brussels has **lowered speed limits** for drivers. Paris has **subsidized e-bike purchases and reimbursed bike repairs** as well as created more bike parking spaces. And in many places, reduced traffic has encouraged **inexperienced cyclists who might shun busier roads**.

The pandemic has shown that with will and resources, change can happen fast. Yet fast typically doesn't mean thoughtful. Even before Covid-19, the voices involved in discussions about cycling infrastructure **often lacked diversity** of race, gender, class, physical ability and even cycling style. Without widening consultation to include a broader range of perspectives, it's not clear whether any post-pandemic shift to urban cycling will lead to greater inclusivity.



## Perceptions and stereotypes

In general, cities don't cater to cyclists equally. From **New York** to **Bogotá**, bike lanes and bike-share docking stations, if they exist, tend to be located in whiter, wealthier neighborhoods.

Cycling infrastructure is often a **component of gentrification**, as cities attempt to woo the kinds of upwardly mobile professionals who are attracted to areas with such amenities. "The dominant approach has been a gentrification model of associating bicycle development with urban renewal projects," says Adonia Lugo, a cultural anthropologist who researches urban cycling at Antioch University in Los Angeles.

Yet this favors the kinds of cyclists officials want to see, rather than the kinds of cyclists already depending on bikes. White-collar workers with helmets, high-vis vests and bright lights might be especially conspicuous in city centers, but they're not the majority. In the US, low-income



people are more likely than well-off hipsters to cycle to work. As of 2015, about half of US cyclists **earned less than \$25,000 per year**.

*Historically, a small elite of cyclists has influenced cycling policies. (Credit: Getty Images)*

Historically, a **small elite of cyclists** has influenced cycling policies. Traditionally

members of recreational cycle clubs, these impassioned, well-meaning cyclists have the clout to cultivate relationships with local officials. They've tended to advocate for policies that benefit them, but don't necessarily work for people with **different backgrounds, needs and neighborhood realities**. And because urban and transport planning have been mostly **niche, homogeneous professions**, planners have traditionally had more in common with these privileged cyclists than with other kinds of bike riders.

In London, the common perception that cycling is dominated by a particular demographic – well-off male professionals who can afford specialist bikes and performance clothing – can lead to stereotyping based on income, race and gender. There may be some grounds for this – in 2017, only 27% of current cycle trips in London were made by women and 15% by BAME individuals, **according to a Transport for London report**. A **2011 report by public health researchers** showed a circular effect of the belief that cycling is only for affluent white men. For instance, "the very invisibility of Black and Asian cyclists reduces their opportunities to see cycling as a candidate mode of transport".

Behavioral and institutional patterns, as well as infrastructure, can make new cyclists feel welcome. In the US, aggressive policing disproportionately targets immigrant, black, low-income cyclists. For example, a **study in Oakland**, where 28% of the population is black,

showed that 60% of cyclists pulled over by the police were black. Similar patterns have been reported for other US cities.

This may not deter people cycling out of necessity, but skewed policing contributes to skewed perceptions about the kinds of cycling that are ideal. It also leads to stigmatization **and reduced safety** of certain groups. This neglects the reasons for **racial disparities in helmet wearing**, for instance. And in one example of environmental injustice, **highways in the US have been disproportionately sited in ethnic-minority areas**. This has limited the space for cycling and made one vilified behavior – cycling on the pavement – more common in some areas. Overall, putting the onus on individual cyclists to make themselves safe by outfitting themselves with accessories shifts responsibility away from city authorities for designing safer streets.

### A more inclusive model

The picture is very different in The Netherlands, which famously has more bikes than people. **27% of trips made by Dutch residents** are by bike (compared to **under 1% of daily trips in the US**). It's a nation in which cycling is more inclusive than other countries – though as pointed out by Isabelle Clement, the director of NGO Wheels for Wellbeing, that inclusiveness has sometimes been more accidental than deliberate.

Unlike in cities like Los Angeles, in Amsterdam “no one associates going by bike with poverty”, according to Lia Karsten, an urban geographer at the University of Amsterdam. Nor is cycling necessarily a marker of affluence. This is the result of **decades of sustained policy**, including devoting a great deal of space to cycling on the roads, in the laws, in parking spaces and even in school curricula. And it's eased by Amsterdam's relatively flat and compact geography.

In part because of the large number of parents who use cargo bikes, for instance, easy turning circles, step-free lifts and larger bike shelters are common. These kinds of design features benefit not just parents toting kids, but also people with bigger adaptive cycles and delivery cyclists – showing the complementarities of inclusive design. Nor is it standard to associate cycling with a certain kind of physical prowess. Fewer than 1% of Dutch cyclists wear helmets, in a country where casual, everyday cycling has been called **“a form of walking-with-wheels”**.



*Cycling infrastructure is often a component of gentrification. (Credit: Getty Images)*

Karsten says that cycling in the Netherlands spans income classes, although there are differences across ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. **Immigrants (particularly immigrant women) tend to cycle less** than people born in the Netherlands, in part because the foreign-born have less exposure to cycling from a young age.

And according to Karsten, one effect of the pandemic has been to exacerbate an existing issue in Amsterdam: overcrowding in bike lanes. This has made middle-class parents, and increasingly working-class parents, nervous about children (and elderly people) using bike lanes independently. Karsten hopes that increased attention to packed bike lanes will encourage policymakers to devote less space to cars.

Overall, however, there are numerous benefits from the normalization of cycling. **One study estimates** that cycling has contributed a half-year to Dutch life expectancy, with health benefits that represent over 3% of Dutch GDP, and that residents cycle most in their late 60s. Though imperfect, the Dutch model suggests that more inclusive cycling can be developed by making cycling appealing and accessible to people of all income groups, and by taking the long view.

### Turning a boom into a cultural shift

Partly inspired by the Dutch model, the UK government **announced on 28 July** a £2bn (\$2.58bn) plan to make the UK more cyclist- and pedestrian-friendly. The plan includes bike repair vouchers, enhanced lorry safety standards, and the creation of additional “mini Hollands”. However, the opposition Labour Party has criticized this plan for being too slow to come into effect.

But being able to take long view can feel like a luxury during these uncertain days. Some urban planners are frank about inclusion being a casualty of the rapidly implemented bike measures. During a **recent online discussion** on how UK cities are being adapted for active travel, Mel Cazzato, a cycling planner for Transport for London, acknowledged, “We don’t always have the time to consult that we did before in the normal way. Your average cycle route previously used to take several years to plan and deliver. But you’ve had to find innovative ways to compress these timescales into months and in some cases weeks.”

Yet as lockdowns ease, **more lasting changes will be needed** to ensure that people continue riding (and thus that cities continue to benefit from cleaner air, fewer road deaths and healthier residents). This could include physically separating cycles from cars – rather than simply marking streets to temporarily designate bike paths/mobility lanes. More secure



barriers will be especially important to keep women riding as motorists return to the road. **Milan** and **Seattle** are among the cities making bike-friendly changes permanent.

*27% of trips made by Dutch residents are by bike, compared to under 1% of daily trips in the US. (Credit: Getty Images)*

Clement, of Wheels for Wellbeing, is advocating for some more thoughtful planning at this stage of the pandemic. A **handcyclist**, she's one of the **66% of disabled people in London who are able to ride a bike** (although adaptive cycles tend to be expensive). She's frustrated that transport planners and engineers don't seem to consider that "cyclists are not all cycling on two wheels and are not all young 20 to 40-year-old males". A lack of ramps and dropped curbs are examples.

She argues that in mobility planning during Covid-19, "disabled people seem to have been forgotten pretty much, because it's all been done in a rush". Wheels for Wellbeing are calling for local authorities to **consult and be responsive to people with disabilities** in the post-lockdown recovery, "because otherwise you're just piling on inequality and inequality, and excluding people from their own environment" – that is, keeping people from being able to use the streets and public spaces in their own neighborhoods.

So post-lockdown cycling planning must grapple with complex legacies. Recent history offers some lessons. Lugo says that after the Great Recession that began in 2007, urban cycling boomed. Yet as the economy improved, many people shifted transport modes away from cycling; "a boom movement doesn't necessarily translate into a cultural shift".

Yet she does believe that as countries begin easing out of lockdown, there's an opportunity for cycling advocates to model more inclusive forms of cycling development. It's long overdue to **actually listen to residents** – all groups of residents – when redesigning city mobility. This would help to overcome the blind spots that Clement, Lugo and others have witnessed in transport planners. Lugo says of bike development planning, "I'm hoping that now there can be some more reflection about whether that's a strategy that changes, that breaks with our past in terms of planning practices that leave out marginalized communities, or whether that's kind of a continuation."

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