

## BMTS Article Digest March – April 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



### CenterLines

Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletter.ph>

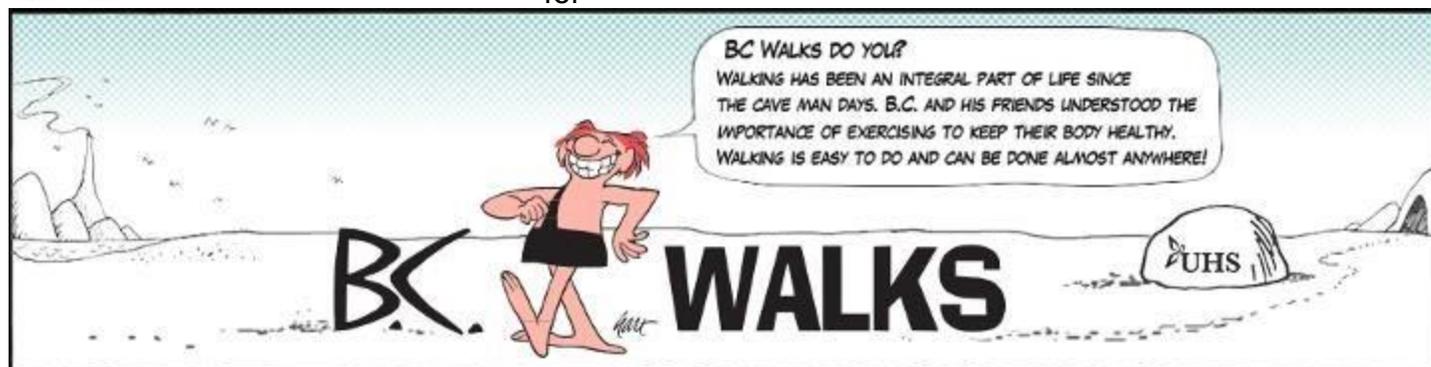
**CenterLines** is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.

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## THOSE WE'VE LOST

# William Helmreich, Sociologist and a Walker in the City, Dies at 74

A scholar of Judaism as well, he walked every block in New York — totaling 6,163 miles — and wrote a book about his odyssey. He died of the coronavirus.



William B. Helmreich on East 9th Street in Lower Manhattan in 2013. What made his ramble through New York so beguiling were the serendipitous encounters and discoveries of offbeat corners of city life. Credit...Annie Ling for The New York Times

By **Joseph Berger**

March 30, 2020

*This obituary is part of a series about people who have died in the coronavirus pandemic. Read about others [here](#).*

When William B. Helmreich was 9 years old, his father, a Polish-Jewish refugee from the Nazis who was curious about his latest haven, New York City, started taking him on weekend outings that he playfully called “Last Stop.” Father and son would choose a subway line at random, take it to the end and spend a few hours exploring the novelties of neighborhoods they had never seen.

Those adventures enlivened several years of the 1950s for young Mr. Helmreich and were in part the germ of two of the 18 books he would write or edit as a longtime professor of sociology and scholar of Judaism.

The first of the two, “Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America” (1992), was a data-driven study that highlighted the survivors’ resilience

and achievements and contradicted the commonplace image of them as irremediably traumatized.

The second, [“The New York Nobody Knows: Walking 6,000 Miles in the City”](#) (2013), chronicled Professor Helmreich’s experiences over four years — and many pairs of Rockports — walking virtually every city block, all 121,000, totaling 6,163 miles. Chatting with strangers, he unearthed a cornucopia of colorful city sidelights; he even once approached members of the street gang the Bloods outside a Bronx housing project and asked them where he could buy one of their red jackets.

This is how he explained his disarming technique to the comedian Barry Mitchell for a YouTube [video](#):

“I just say, ‘What’s that horse doing in that guy’s backyard?’, or, ‘Is this neighborhood dangerous? Can I get a good apartment for my son?’ In other words, I just start talking to people.”

A distinguished professor of sociology at City College and the City University of New York’s Graduate Center, he died on Saturday at his home in Great Neck, N.Y. He was 74. His son Jeffrey said the cause was the coronavirus.

Curious, gregarious and inexhaustibly energetic, Mr. Helmreich was fearless in his study of human beings. As a graduate student at Washington University in St. Louis, he chose to do his dissertation on a group of black-power advocates who were hostile toward white people like him, even once getting into a tussle with one of its members. In 1973, the study was turned into his first book, “The Black Crusaders: A Case Study of a Black Militant Organization.”

Although for a time he helped organize the annual parade in Manhattan celebrating Israel, he conducted a two-hour interview in 2003 in Gaza with a leader of Hamas, Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, who had just survived an attack by Israeli helicopters.

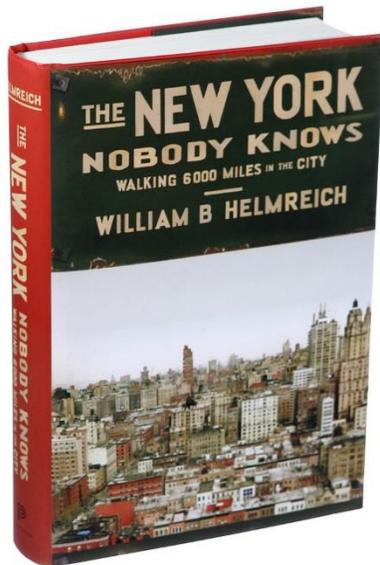
The book of his that broke important new ground was “Against All Odds.” In writing it he interviewed 380 Holocaust survivors and found that, far from the pathological stereotypes surrounding them, they had more stable marriages, equivalent economic status and a lesser need to seek psychiatric help than other American Jews of the same age.

He argued that traits like adaptability, tenacity and resourcefulness, which had been needed to endure near starvation, terror and the loss of so many loved ones, had enabled most survivors to flourish in the freedom and opportunities that America afforded. The book won an award from the Jewish Book Council.

What made his ramble through New York so beguiling — besides the sheer feat of his feet — were the serendipitous encounters and discoveries of offbeat corners of city life. In Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, he met a man whose ample garage was chock-a-block with old Dodger baseball uniforms, carousel horses, gaudy amusement arcade machines and vintage cars — all as a wistful homage to the Brooklyn of his childhood.

In Gowanus, Brooklyn, he came across a long-dormant grocery on a street of rowhouses and found that it that had been kept as a shrine by the descendants of a Neapolitan immigrant who had opened the business a century before, its Rheingold and Schaefer beer neon signs flashing at Christmastime in tribute.

“I saw this as a remarkable example of filial piety, something that today’s generation might not understand,” Professor Helmreich told Mr. Mitchell. “Today’s generation is much more techie, much more involved in the present.”



Professor Helmreich’s rambles through New York were inspired in part by a pastime that he and his father called “Last Stop.” They would choose a subway, take it to the end of the line and spend a few hours exploring the novelties of neighborhoods they had never seen. Credit...Alessandra Montalto/The New York Times

William Benno Helmreich was born on Aug. 25, 1945 in Zurich. His parents, Leo and Sally (Finkelstein) Helmreich, had met in Nazi-occupied Belgium and had spirited their way through France into neutral Switzerland. In 1946 the family emigrated to the United States, where his father worked first repairing diamond jewelry and eventually became a diamond dealer.

Settling on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, his parents sent red-haired Willie, as he was known, to Manhattan Day School, a modern Orthodox yeshiva, where teachers noticed his strong tenor voice and had him star in the annual Purim play. (Among his many adult diversions, Professor Helmreich sometimes served as a supplemental cantor.)

He reflected on his mixed feelings about his childhood education in a memoir, “Wake Up, Wake Up to Do the Work of the Creator” (1977), and later studied more advanced yeshivas in “The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Judaism” (1982).

He attended Yeshiva University before doing graduate work at Washington University. As a professor at City College, he could be a riveting teacher, known for provocative interchanges with students and a near photographic memory. Professor Helmreich was the college’s longtime chairman of sociology, writing books on the Jews of Philip Roth’s Newark and the truths and distortions of ethnic stereotypes as well as follow-up walking guides to, separately, the streets of Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island and Queens.

In addition to his son Jeffrey, an assistant professor of philosophy and law at the University of California at Irvine, Mr. Helmreich is survived by his wife, Helaine Helmreich, a speech therapist who wrote a well-received novel, “The Chimney Tree”; another son, Joseph, a writer; a daughter, Deborah Halpern, a speech pathologist; and four grandchildren. A third son, Alan, died of a brain aneurysm in 1998 at the age of 24.

Learning of Professor Helmreich’s sudden death, Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University, said: “He was in the wrong profession for the coronavirus. Willie loved talking to people. Social distancing was not in his nature.”

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Seniors walking in Manhattan. Ed Yourdon on Flickr via Creative Commons.

## TRANSPORTATION

# Aging Population Needs Walkable, Bikeable Cities

Seniors have the most to gain from pedestrian and cycling improvements—yet they often feel threatened by changes that provide alternatives to driving. Here are ways to include seniors in active transportation planning.

[KIT KRANKEL MCCULLOUGH](#)

MARCH 5, 2020

The first time someone accused me of being “ableist” I was shocked. I was advocating ways to make downtown more walkable, including pedestrianizing some streets. I view walkability as a means to provide access for all abilities. Yet here someone was telling me, “not everyone can walk, you know.” I’ve since encountered the “ableist” epithet on other occasions and in other forums. I truly think it is a meme being promulgated by [Big Asphalt](#). It is the new “war on cars.”

Of course, it is ableist to insist on an environment that privileges only those who are able to drive. Only 60 percent of the American population can drive. Our automobile environments disenfranchise and endanger those who are physically unable or too young to drive, or too poor to own a car. The total number of nondrivers is expected to increase dramatically as Baby Boomers age.

Yet many of these Baby Boomers are tightly gripping the steering wheel, feeling threatened by any proposals that might impinge on their ability to go by car. It is understandable that older residents are resistant to active transportation proposals. As they lose physical mobility, they find themselves

becoming more reliant on the ability to drive and park close to their destination. They don't see themselves using protected bikeways or walking through downtown. Moreover, they fear pedestrian and biking facilities will reduce their access by car, especially if improvements involve removing street parking, reducing traffic lanes or closing streets to cars altogether.

## An age divide

Colleagues tell me that they too get pushback on proposals for bike and pedestrian facilities. People in public meetings say they won't use these modes. Who comes to these meetings? Older people, including retirees and other Baby Boomers, who are still driving and can get to the meeting by car. Those who most need an alternative, because they can't drive or can't afford a car, aren't there. There is an age divide in support for active transportation projects—younger residents are much more supportive but too often aren't heard.

It's true that young people are more likely to walk and bike as well as use other modes. Young people today have many more options to driving, literally at their fingertips. App-based services target and cater to mostly the young, who navigate the world through their phones rather than from behind a steering wheel. Bike share users are disproportionately young, white, and college educated. That young guy whizzing by you on a scooter? Studies show that the users of electric scooters are predominantly young men. So, it's no wonder new mobility services, including bike shares and e-scooters, are seen primarily as the province of younger people. Likewise, protected bikeways and other infrastructure that support new forms of mobility are viewed as mostly for the young and physically fit.

Yet it is seniors and others unable to drive have the most to gain from mobility options. Many older people see themselves becoming more dependent on driving as they age and lose physical ability to bike or walk longer distances. But they are wrong. We typically lose our ability to drive long before we lose the ability to walk. Able non-drivers and others with mobility impairments are potential users of new kinds of "[Little Vehicles](#)," such as seated scooters or electric-assist tricycles, that can be used safely in protected bike lanes. Such vehicles are especially useful for those who can't walk the distance to and from the transit stop.

## Including seniors in active transportation planning

Cities have real reason to cater to older residents, and not just because they turn out to public meetings. Seniors will comprise an increasing portion of our populations, in what some planners are calling the "silver tsunami." As seniors aspire to age in place, cities must plan for their needs. Supporting active transportation—making cities more walkable and bikeable—will be crucial.

Seniors have the most to gain from pedestrian and cycling improvements. How can we build support among older residents for these proposals?

### 1. **Include a diversity of vehicles as part of shared systems.**

Bike shares have shown to increase cycling in many cities by offering opportunities for non-cyclists to give it a try without a large personal investment. Likewise, bike shares that offer a range of vehicles, including e-bikes, tricycles, and seated scooters, can help bring awareness to the availability

of these kinds of vehicles. Detroit’s MoGo is an example of a bike share system that offers a variety of vehicles to serve a diverse abilities.

## 2. **Make bike shares accessible.**

It is important that bike shares be accessible by means other than a smartphone. Older residents, even if they have a smartphone, are typically less comfortable using app-based services. Dockless systems, like many of the e-scooter services, must be navigated through an app. With station-based systems it is possible to locate bikes without a phone. The stations themselves make the system more visible and understandable and can include physical maps and instructions on how to use the system. A smartphone is not required to unlock a bike; users have the option to swipe their member access card or receive a printed code generated at the station kiosk.

## 3. **Integrate bike shares and facilities with transit.**

Many Little Vehicles, such as seated scooters, e-bikes and tricycles, can help people who have difficulty walking get to and from the bus stop. Co-locate bikeways and bike share stations with transit stops, as well as parking for personal scooters and tricycles. In Milwaukee on-board stop announcements alert bus riders to nearby bikeshare stations.

A grandmother carries grandchildren on a three-wheeled cargo bicycle. Source: Urban Cargo Bikes.

Make bike shares part of the overall transit system. Los Angeles Metro Bikeshare allows users to check out a bike using their transit card. In Pittsburgh, transit users can use the bike share system for free with their transit pass.



## 4. **Reach out.**

Engage with communities that are underrepresented in using active transportation, including seniors. Many city bikeshare systems have outreach workers dedicated to expanding bike share use in underserved communities. These workers can reach out to seniors and help older residents understand the benefits of biking and bike systems and how to use them.

Community rides and workshops can be targeted toward seniors and retirees. Philadelphia’s Indego system hosts “urban riding basics” classes that focus on riding safely in traffic, choosing the best route, and using Indego bikeshare. Indego also offers adult learn-to-ride classes as well as monthly rides through different Philadelphia neighborhoods.

## 5. **Share the statistics.**

According to Jana Lynott, senior strategic policy adviser with the AARP Public Policy Institute, we outlive our driving years by on average a decade.<sup>1</sup> One in five people over 65 don't drive. By age 80, 65 percent are no longer driving, while only 40 percent have difficulty walking. Seniors eventually have to give up driving even as they are still able to walk.

Baby Boomers have famously resisted growing old. But they too will eventually succumb to the statistics. In fact, they are even more likely to become able non-drivers than their predecessors, as they remain physically active but lose eyesight and motor skills that diminish their ability to drive. Help older residents understand their future will probably involve walking and biking instead of driving, not the other way around. Active transportation facilities can help them maintain their independence when they can no longer drive.



Seniors going uphill on e-bikes. Source: Bosch Bike Systems.

## 6. **Include older people in renderings of proposals.**

Help older residents see themselves in these projects. Show seniors and others of diverse physical abilities on seated scooters or tricycles in the bike lane, seated on benches, strolling or socializing on the car-free street.

## 7. **Plan for the “silver tsunami.”**

As our population ages, cities must plan for the needs of older residents. Active transportation—making cities more walkable and bikeable—is a crucial part of that planning. Where we are growing old matters for our health. Physical activity helps older adults postpone their physical decline and provides them with feelings of independence and empowerment that contribute to social and emotional health.<sup>2</sup> Walkable/bikeable environments support healthy activity and allow older adults to age in place.

Perhaps no other group needs pedestrian and cycling improvements more than seniors and others with physical impairments. It would be ableist to not make our cities more walkable and bikeable.

<sup>1</sup> Morrissey, Janet. “[Companies Respond to an Urgent Health Care Need](#),” *The New York Times*, August 9, 2018. Accessed February 15, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ford, D'Lyn. “[Walkable neighborhoods linked with more active older adults](#),” *NC State News*, October 11, 2017. Accessed February 12, 2019.

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# Biking to work appears more dangerous than other commuting options, study finds



By [Katie Hunt](#), CNN

Updated 7:30 PM ET, Wed March 11, 2020

**(CNN)** Cycling to work can lead to better fitness and health, but to some biking newbies it can feel like an accident waiting to happen.

The fear of injury while cycling through traffic deters many people from biking to work. In the UK, only 4% of people cycle to work even though around 40% have access to a bike, with [64% of respondents in the British Social Attitudes \(PDF\)](#) survey agreeing that cycling to work is too dangerous.

Is that fear justified? Researchers at the University of Glasgow decided to find out. They examined hospital records and other data from 230,390 commuters from 22 places in the UK, 5,704 of whom said they used cycling as their main form of transportation. The results of their study were published on Wednesday in the BMJ medical journal.



They found that commuting by bike was associated with a 45% higher risk of admission to a hospital for an injury compared with other methods of commuting, and longer cycling distances were linked to a higher risk of injury. However, they found the health benefits of cycling were considerable, being linked to a lower risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease and premature death.

Participants were recruited between 2006 and 2010 as part of the wider UK Biobank data set and tracked for an average of 8.9 years. Of the people who only cycled to work, 7% were injured, while among people who cycled for part of the commute, 6% were injured. In contrast, 4.3% of the commuters who traveled by car or public transport were injured. Walking to work wasn't associated with a greater risk of injury.

In an editorial linked to the study, Anne Lusk, a research scientist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said that the study revealed an "urgent need to improve safety for cyclists."

"Enhanced cycle tracks in dedicated space beside sidewalks should be as revered and generously funded as historic buildings and trails," she wrote.

## Fewer deaths

However, despite the higher risk of injury, the study showed that cycling to work was linked to tangible health benefits.

When cyclists were compared with all other commuters, they showed a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease like heart attacks and stroke, lower risk of first cancer diagnosis and lower risk of death overall.

"What we're saying is that if 1,000 people who don't currently cycle to work change their minds, on average over the next 10 years, we would see a total of 26 injuries that we would not have otherwise -- three of which would result in hospitalization of more than a week," said Paul Welsh, a senior lecturer at Institute of Cardiovascular & Medical Sciences at Glasgow University.



But, he added, "The benefit is 15 fewer cancers, four fewer heart attacks or stroke and three fewer deaths."

Welsh said that governments need to do more than paint cycle lanes on roads if they want to get people on their bikes. Segregated cycle lanes like those in Amsterdam and Copenhagen are what's needed to make people feel safe, he said.

"It involves getting away from the mindset that cars have priority. Does this road need to be two-way? Can it be one-way with larger pavements and segregated cycle lanes?"

Right now, he said the attitude among some cyclists was that you have to get mentally "geared up for war on the road," but in places with segregated lanes, cycling was much more diverse and accessible.

"It's not just middle-aged men wearing Lycra."

The study was observational and can only establish a link between cycling and injury, but the study tried to take into account factors such as age, sex and physical activity levels. Welsh said.

Cycling was associated with a higher risk of injury to arms and legs, the torso, the head or neck, and fracture injuries, as well as injury-related hospital stays, the study found.

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The article below was in the Sunday (March 15) Press & Sun-Bulletin's Parade insert provides some perspective regarding the importance of the Rt. 434 Greenway, as well as continuing to build-out and maintain the entire Two Rivers Greenway system. The link for the entire article is below the graphic. Enjoy!

AMERICA'S BEST

## 50+ Greenways Across America: The Very Best Hiking Trails, Outdoor Art and More From Every State

MARCH 13, 2020 – 5:00 AM

By NICOLA BRIDGES



*(Steve Stankiewicz)*

Click on link below for entire article!

<https://parade.com/1006699/nicolabridges/greenways/>

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