

BMTS Article Digest April - May 2022

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

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TODAY

NBC's Stephanie Gosk recalls frightening accident while riding bike over bridge

Stephanie Gosk

I suppose perfecting sourdough would have been a safer pandemic hobby, but it wasn't mine. No, I took up cycling — the fast kind with a feather-light bike and clip-in pedals. I certainly wasn't alone. Bikes were flying off shelves as people looked for ways to stay active outside. But this was about more than just looking for a way to exercise. With the world on lockdown, biking felt like a form of rebellion.

COVID-19 infected everything. My job was spent telling the stories of the virus and when I wasn't working, life was spent managing it. But not on a bike. I chose how long I rode, where I went and how fast I got there. The only limit was my own fitness and I could control that, too.



© Courtesy Stephanie GoskGosk with her children — and her bike, which became a beloved hobby during the pandemic. (Courtesy Stephanie Gosk)

There are some real barriers to entry. You need a bike and then you need to know how to ride clipped in. Doing it for the first time is scary, because it's risky. The risk is part of the thrill. It also can lead to some embarrassment. There was that Saturday morning that I unclipped my right foot, preparing to stop. Then when the bike stopped, I tried to stand on my left foot, still securely attached to the pedal. In slow motion, in front of (what felt like) thousands of people, I toppled over in the middle of the street. Thankfully, I guess, the humiliation was worse than the fall.

With some practice, I gained confidence and started venturing farther. In New York City, the best place to ride is outside of New York City. Cyclists in the dozens, and even hundreds on the weekend, bike over the George Washington Bridge into New Jersey. From there the world opens up. My rides went from 20 to 30 to even 100 miles (just that once).

I spent the first COVID summer in Connecticut and the riding just got better and better. My brother has been cycling for years and with him as my guide I cruised through beautiful country roads nearly every day. I was hooked. There was a fleeting moment when moving out of the city permanently felt like a good idea. Fleeting.

Instead, I went back to Manhattan and joined the New York Cycle Club. Riding in a group is a lot more fun than riding alone. After a cold and snowy winter, I was thrilled to get back out there this spring. I signed up for my first ride in March, 65 miles over the bridge with about 50 riders.



© Courtesy Stephanie GoskNBC's Stephanie Gosk recalls frightening accident while riding bike over bridge

Overly eager that morning, I took off with the lead group. I had no business riding with them. By the time we hit eight miles, I was getting dropped. It was in that moment, tearing down a hill, looking at the riders up ahead and not paying attention to the road, that I hit it — a pothole grabbed the front wheel and threw the bike, with me on it, down hard. I slid along the pavement. My head hit and my face dragged.

I crashed in front of a house in suburban New Jersey. The owners thankfully saw the whole thing and called 911. Tenafly

police officers got there fast, followed by an ambulance. The scene was grim. My face was a mess and so were my hands. My [helmet](#) was cracked clear through in two different places. When I got to the emergency room the doctor said to me in the kind of casual tone you would expect from a guy who sees dozens of people like me over the course of the biking season, "Your helmet looks like this so your head doesn't have to."

© Courtesy Stephanie GoskGosk at the hospital after her accident. (Courtesy Stephanie Gosk)

The injuries looked gruesome but what's most important is what *didn't* happen to me. I didn't break any bones. I didn't lose any teeth. I didn't get a concussion. That's the big one. The helmet did its job.



I did get nine stitches above my left eye and three in my left hand. My thumb needed surgery because I tore a ligament. I looked like a prize fighter for a couple weeks. On



the street people stared with a mix of disgust, curiosity and a touch of admiration. It's not a good look in my line of work.

© Courtesy Stephanie GoskCourtesy Stephanie Gosk

My 8-year-old daughter was pretty candid. "Mommy," she said, "Maybe you should stick to the Peloton." I have since picked up the bike from the police department and it is in remarkably good shape. I need a new helmet. The daughter has wisdom beyond her years, but the chances of me not getting back on that bike are about as good as me perfecting sourdough.

[STREETS](#)

What If We Planned Streets To Maximize Life?



Ethan Kent

Apr 11, 2022 • 8 min read

The patterns of activity that occur in one place on this street display the social life outcomes for which streets can be planned.



Tweede Tuindwarstraat, in the Jordaan District of Amsterdam, is a street that supports social life, drawing people to slow down and connect.

When wandering through a network of streets, we are naturally drawn to its center. On each street, we seek out the slowest point, often at an [intersection](#) – and if we continue to follow this pattern, we gravitate toward progressively slower and more [engaging streets](#) and spaces.

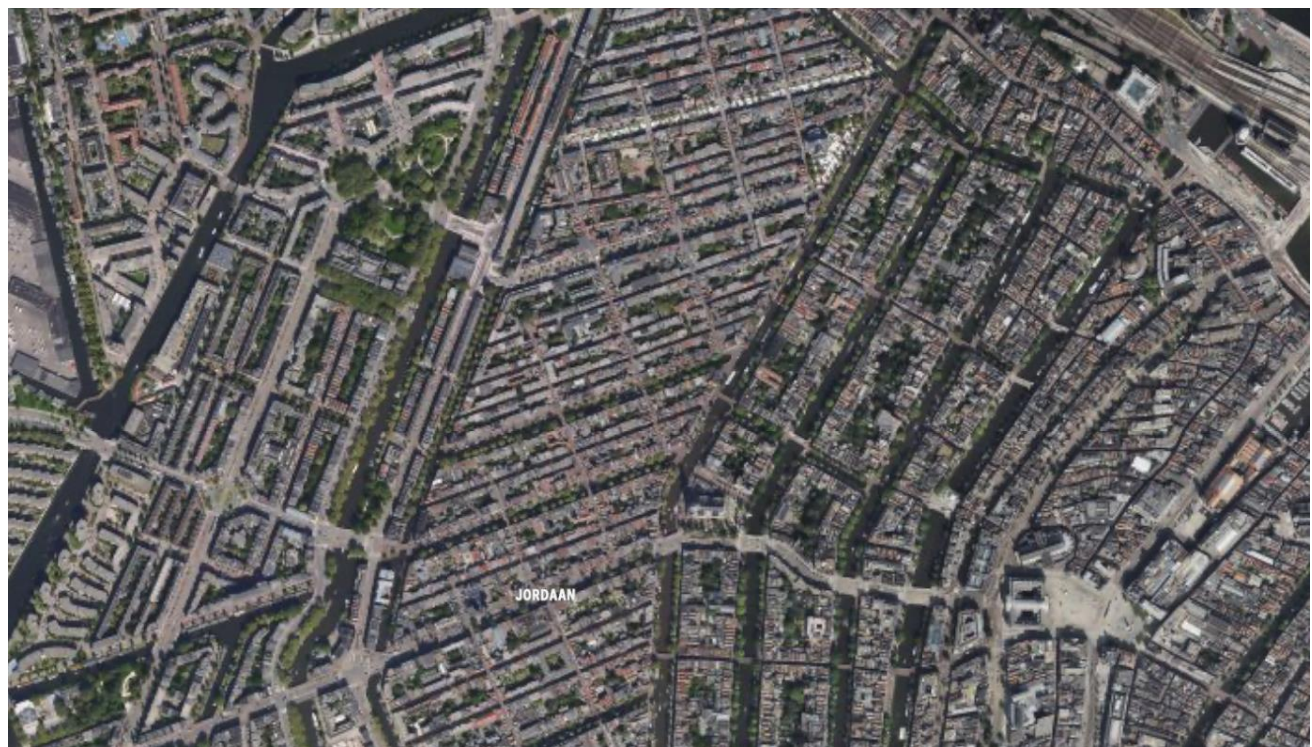


The center of neighborhood is around the slowest part of the street, in front of a cafe and a flower shop.

Amsterdam's Jordaan District offers just such a network of streets, where the external thoroughfares feed into increasingly pedestrian-oriented and comfortable spaces. Moving into the district, shops get smaller and increasingly connected with the street. There, walking slows down to strolling, conversations grow longer, and people feel justified, and even compelled to just stop and linger, taking in the scene.



Amsterdam, while mostly built at a human scale has a strong hierarchy of streets and canals supporting accessibility and destinations.



The Jordaan District, an historic working class neighborhood, has tight streets surrounded by larger access roads.



The streets get slower and more engaging as one gets closer to the center.

The desire to pause and experience the street peaks in a section of Tuindwarsstraat near the center of the surrounding district. The nexus of a few destinations; a flower shop next to a bar, and across the street from a cafe, creates what is perhaps the slowest place in the neighborhood. Each passerby moves through the space with their attention engaged, making eye contact and often stopping to read a menu, greet a friend or purchase some flowers. These patterns of use all feed into one another, compounding into an even more attractive place to spend time.



While the neighborhood has many social hubs, perhaps the most engaging is at the center by a cafe and a flower shop.

While the pace is slow, the space supports dynamic experiences, exchanges, and interactions for its participants. The vibrancy of these interactions is buttressed by the broad diversity of

people, all allowed to feel equal and respected in this space, while being brought together by the strong cultural identity of the setting. The greatest indicators of its comfort, and perhaps its greatest achievements, are its sociability, reflected in consistent displays of engaged conversation, picture taking, and affectionate greetings.

While not technically defined as a “[shared space](#)” or “[complete street](#),” this spot succeeds as both. All types of traffic can easily and comfortably access this place and benefit from its qualities. Even a passing truck driver is able to engage in the social life of the street, stopping briefly to talk with café patrons. But because of the strong hierarchy of streets surrounding the Jordaan District, the transit and bike orientation of the city, and the slowness of this street, it does not carry significant traffic.



Bikes, cars and trucks all use the street, frequently slowing to engage with, and contribute to the social life.

There are many features of the street to which one can attribute its dynamism, from the neighbors and tourists who traverse it, to the Dutch culture and related scale, density and style of urban design. Indeed, it is through these contexts that we

usually evaluate, explain and experience such spaces. Yet the experience of these fundamental community outcomes; the patterns of social life, of a street performing as a place, is something infinitely possible in human settlements, everywhere.

Across contexts and cultures, when allowed, people naturally gravitate to participating in and creating street life. And it is this life that is the building block of strong communities, cultures and local economies. This particularly dynamic street hums along because of a society that nurtures (and is nurtured by) shared places. As Chuck Marohn of Strong Towns [says](#), “We did not build places like this because we were rich, we became rich because we built places like this.”



The ingredients, and social life outcomes, of the street are achievable at the center of most communities.

The street creates the social and economic lives of its participants, who in turn create the street. It may well be the flower vendor, who spends time in front of his shop adjusting the display and talking with passers by, that truly anchors the place and embodies what this street makes possible.

Retail that competes to contribute to the public experience, not just benefit from it, is usually among the greatest contributors to successful streets, and what allows public streets to compete with malls and chain stores. The life and vitality of cities is defined at this human scale of the street, yet no one but the pedestrian and those serving them really pay this scale any attention.



One might say that this social life is unique to Dutch culture, but this street has clearly shaped and created the culture of its people as much as the people are shaping the street.

No one really [plans streets for the potential of what they can become as a place](#). Even so, Tweede Tuindwarsstraat centers on the daily patterns of social life, business activity, personal mobility and feelings of comfort in the city. While most streets and transportation systems have their foundations in planning for mobility and mitigating its negative impacts, Tuindwarsstraat leads us to ask: *What if we planned streets and transportation systems with the goal of supporting social settings, of planning for places where people want to be?*



Rendering for Washington Street, without I-81. Source: ReThink 81.

TRANSPORTATION

Highway Transformations Funded for New York Cities

[ROBERT STEUTEVILLE](#) APR. 13, 2022

The recently passed New York State budget allocates major funds to further in-city highway removal in the Upstate cities of Syracuse, Albany, Rochester, and Buffalo. All projects have been highlighted by CNU in recent years.

The budget allots \$1.1 billion for removal of I-81 in Syracuse—on top of last year’s \$800 million, [bringing the total to \\$1.9 billion](#) to replace this elevated highway with a “community grid” to reconnect the city’s historic surface streets. This is a major development in the campaign to replace this section of Interstate, the only highway that has been on every CNU [Freeways Without Futures](#) list since 2008.

The first step is to make a detailed plan to take down the aging viaduct, which cuts through the heart of the city and has cast a shadow on downtown for more than half a century. That process can begin after the federal government releases an Environmental Impact Statement, followed by a 30-day comment period, expected imminently. I-81 would be rerouted around the city on the existing I-481. After the viaduct comes down, the city needs to reconnect the street grid, including building a major street along the current I-81 route to carry traffic to and through downtown.

This project could be a game-changer for Syracuse, but the city faces hurdles along the way. One is the [proposed designation](#) of the replacement thoroughfare as a “Business Loop, Qualifying Highway.” Such a designation would force highway dimensions onto the new thoroughfare, reducing the economic and social benefits of re-establishing the grid.

Fortunately, the city recently [hired a new urbanist firm](#), Dover, Kohl & Partners, to examine how the highway will impact surrounding neighborhoods. This \$550,000 study, announced a few weeks ago, will allow the city to weigh in on critical issues of design and neighborhood integration ahead of the highway transformation, building political support for human-scaled solutions.

Syracuse’s I-81 campaign has taken a decade and a half to get this far, but a proposal to transform Albany’s I-787 is moving faster. The Albany Riverfront Collaborative launched its Re-Envision Albany project last fall, and was [recently recognized](#) by CNU’s 2022 Charter Awards.

Now the state has [budgeted \\$5 million](#) to study the future of the highway. The Interstate and a connected stub highway cut Albany off from its riverfront and divide city neighborhoods—its tall overpasses dominate many city streetscapes. I-787 provides access for state workers who live in the suburbs to the state office complex parking facility, among other purposes.

Here's the basic concept: "Albany Riverfront Collaborative is proposing a plan that will remove the overbuilt Exit 3 interchange. The South Mall Arterial and 787 would become boulevards that intersect with the city's grid system. Pedestrians will be able to cross the boulevard at many points, providing uninterrupted access to the Hudson River. The train that runs between 787 will remain, and infrastructure will be built to make it safe to cross."

The state budget also includes \$100 million to transform the north section of Rochester's Inner Loop, a short freeway built around downtown, into a surface street. The East section of the Inner Loop was converted in 2016, and that has resulted in substantial redevelopment, including affordable housing.

In Buffalo, the Kensington Expressway will be getting a makeover. The budget includes up to a billion dollars to restore the Humboldt Parkway, a boulevard that included a central green space, which was taken out in the building of the expressway ["without compromising the long-term capacity of the highway."](#) How that would be accomplished is to be determined.

This article was updated on April 14.

New Research Shows That E-Bikes Are Outpacing Electric Cars Sales in the U.S.

INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS PREDICT THAT MORE THAN 1 MILLION E-BIKES WILL BE SOLD IN THE STATES THIS YEAR.

BY MOLLY HURFORD

Apr 27, 2022



- New research estimates that while 608,000 electric cars and trucks were sold in 2021, more than 880,000 e-bikes were also purchased.
 - Edward Benjamin of the Light Electric Vehicle Association predicts that more than 1 million e-bikes will be sold in the U.S. this year.
 - Rising gas prices may be a factor in the continued surge in e-bike sales.
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People in urban areas are starting to realize that sometimes, it's faster to go by bike than to drive from place to place. Especially when the bike is electric-assisted and capable of zooming through traffic at the same speed as most city speed limits, without the hassle of finding parking. And now that [e-cargo bikes](#) are becoming more readily available and kitted out for comfort, it's an easier decision than ever to swap the minivan for an e-bike.

[Georgia's 11Alive](#) station just investigated and verified the claim that more e-bikes were sold than electric cars last year. Their research team estimates that while 608,000 electric cars and trucks were sold in 2021, more than 880,000 e-bikes were also purchased. That's almost double [the estimated 450,000 e-bikes](#) that were sold in 2020.

Edward Benjamin of the Light Electric Vehicle Association predicts that more than 1 million e-bikes will be sold in the U.S. this year, as the bike industry slowly begins to rebound from the effects of supply chain slowdowns and lack of stock in bike shops. [Electrek](#) reports that in Europe, within the next 10 years, e-bikes may outpace all vehicle sales, including gas and electric.

[The New York Times](#) reported a similar boom, particularly in e-bikes with cargo space for kids. As parents struggled to avoid crowded subways during the COVID pandemic, e-bikes became a practical way to transport the kiddos to school in style, without breaking a sweat or requiring a parking space in the drop-off/pick-up zone. "A lot of mothers are trying to transport their children to school," Damon Victor, owner of Greenpath Electric Bikes in South Brooklyn, told *The Times*. He added, "it's the freedom of moving their children in and out of school easily, the freedom of getting to work on a bike, the freedom of bypassing parking, the freedom of bypassing the traffic."

While initially, the social distancing and outdoor sports boom contributed to high bike sales, another reason to swap a car for a bike has come into play. Rising gas prices may be a factor in the continued surge in e-bike sales, [Bloomberg](#) reports. While buying an electric car may still be out of many consumers' price ranges, with e-bikes becoming more affordable, it's possible to get a decent e-bike for sub-\$1,500, making it an easier purchase to combat high fuel costs. E-bike manufacturer VanMoof's sales have exceeded the company's projections in the last month, and cofounder and chief executive officer Taco Carlier attributed that rise in sales to the increase in gas prices in an email to Bloomberg.

E-bike sales have also surpassed non-e-bike sales in terms of popularity and growth (though not actual numbers quite yet), reports market research company [NPD](#). With 240 percent growth in sales in the last year, e-bikes are outstripping even road bikes. As brands like [Mini Cooper](#) introduce even more subtle e-bikes designed to look more like innocuous unassisted road bikes, we won't be shocked if sales skyrocket.