

BMTS Article Digest

May – June 2024

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

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Speed Limits Are Too Darn High

Drivers don't need to go faster than 20 mph on most city streets.

By [Marin Cogan@marincogan](mailto:MarinCogan@marincogan) May 13, 2024, 6:30am EDT

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Police investigate the scene of a collision between an electric scooter rider and vehicle in Queens, New York, in March. New York last month made it possible to lower speed limits in the city — an effort to prevent crashes like these from becoming fatal amid a rise in deaths on America's roads. *Shawn Inglima/NY Daily News via Getty Images*

Marin Cogan is a senior correspondent at Vox. She writes features on a wide range of subjects, including traffic safety, gun violence, and the legal system. Prior to Vox, she worked as a writer for New York magazine, GQ, ESPN the Magazine, and other publications.

Last month, a group of families whose loved ones were killed by drivers successfully lobbied the New York state legislature to pass a law allowing New York City to **set its own speed limits**.

Sammy's Law allows city officials — rather than the state's Department of Transportation — to determine the speed limits on their streets with input from community members. The bill will allow the city to drop the speed limit to 20 miles per hour on some streets in an effort to reduce pedestrian deaths.

New York's not alone in its efforts to lower speed limits. California lawmakers **announced new legislation** this year to cut speed limits in school zones to 20 mph or less. The city of Oakland also **reduced speed limits in several corridors** following **a new state law** that gave local governments the ability to determine speeds on their roads. Washington, DC, **reduced the city's default speed limit** — in other words, the speed limit anywhere where there isn't a sign posted saying otherwise — to 20 miles per hour in 2020, and **slowed traffic on major corridors** from 30 mph to 25 mph in 2022. These efforts have become especially important in the last few years, as the number of pedestrian deaths in the US **has reached a 40-year high**.

There's a reason why cities and states are lowering the speed limit to 20 mph: It's the speed at which most pedestrians who get hit by a car still have a good chance of survival. Above that, risk rises exponentially: A person hit by a vehicle going 30 miles per hour is **70 percent more likely to be killed** than by a car going 25. The average risk of death **reaches 50 percent** when the driver is going 42 mph, and 90 percent at 58 mph — above that, a pedestrian's chances of survival get very slim.

There's a good case to be made that speed limits are too high on city streets. Speeding was a factor in almost **a third of all traffic deaths in 2021**, and the US has a **traffic fatality** rate **that's 50 percent higher** than it is in other comparable countries in Western Europe, Canada, and Australia.

And there are signs that lowering the speed limit can help. Research shows that cities that reduced speed limits to 20 miles per hour saw a **67 percent reduction** in collisions involving children.

Speeding isn't the only reason why the US has such high road fatality rates. American streets are designed in ways that **encourage drivers to go too fast**. State departments of **transportation** typically set speed limits on roads maintained by the state, and the proliferation of roads that are built like highways but still used by lots of people on foot has helped to create the **pedestrian fatality crisis**. Increasingly, Americans are also driving **bigger, heavier vehicles**, which are **more dangerous to people outside of the vehicle** than sedans and other small cars.

Making matters worse, drivers in the United States have gotten more **reckless and distracted** since the start of the pandemic. A **breakdown in traffic enforcement** has only contributed to a general sense that there aren't serious consequences for dangerous driving.

Anyone who's engaged in activism knows how difficult it is for their efforts to result in meaningful change in public policy. This campaign to get Sammy's Law passed in New York was no exception. Families for Safe Streets, the organization that pushed for the law, **came together in 2014**, led by Amy Cohen, whose son, Sammy Cohen Eckstein, was killed by a driver in Brooklyn in 2013. In the year after Sammy was killed, the group successfully lobbied to lower the city's default speed limit from 30 miles per hour to 25, but the push for the city to lower its speed limits further took years. Despite Gov. Kathy Hochul including Sammy's Law **in her budget, support from the city council**, and **a hunger strike** by Cohen and other mothers last year, the bill was held up by the legislature, thanks to concerns about political backlash from drivers. As a consequence, Sammy's Law didn't make it to a vote until this year.

"I've come to learn, painfully, that change is slow," Cohen told Vox in 2022. "Knowing that it could be done so quickly, and we're not moving quickly enough, is heartbreaking. Every day we are continuously welcoming new members to this horrible, horrible club."

That year, pedestrian fatalities in the US rose to **the highest they'd been in four decades**. Other parents, like Jessica Hart, whose daughter Allison was **killed by a driver in Washington, DC, in 2021**, began speaking out and **demanding** their local governments do more to ensure safe streets.

Reducing speed limits on city streets is a good first step, but it's not enough to end the pedestrian fatality crisis on its own. Meaningfully reducing deaths requires redesigning roadways in ways that force drivers to slow down — by reducing the number of lanes, [building out curbs](#) and [raised crosswalks](#), or adding bollards and [bends](#) to roads.

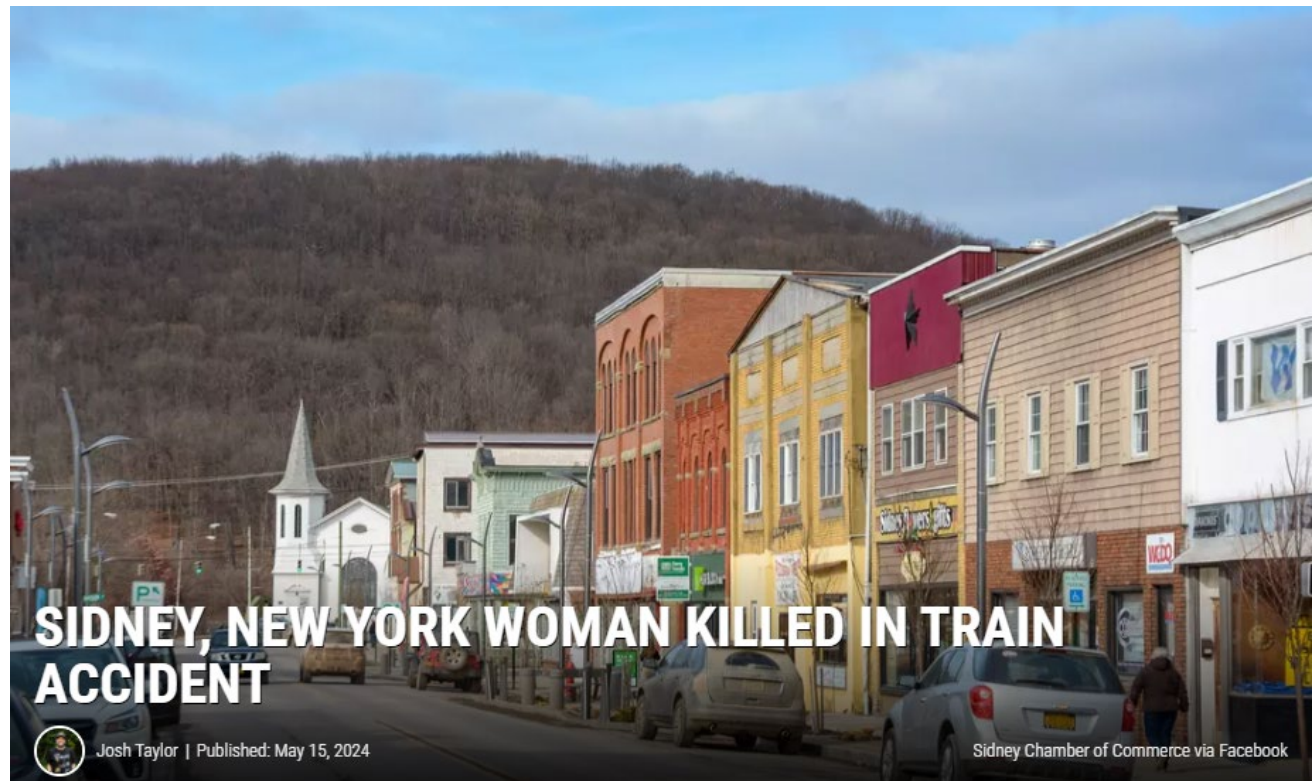
Lowering the speed limit also doesn't do much good if people believe they can speed without consequences. In Europe, speed limits are consistently and reliably enforced via speed cameras, [resulting in lower traffic deaths](#). In the US, speed cameras tend to be unpopular both with politicians and the public, in part because no one likes getting a ticket. But investing the funds raised by cameras directly into road safety improvements would help reduce public cynicism that they're just ripping off drivers.

The automotive industry could make a big difference, too, if it wanted to. Auto manufacturers could put [speed governors in cars](#), something the [European Union](#) is requiring of new vehicles beginning this summer, to prevent people from driving at deadly speeds — but the effort has not gained serious traction in the US.

What will ultimately work is likely a combination of several different safety reforms. “It will take a long, sustained effort to change driver behavior if we want to have fewer deaths in this country,” [says](#) Michelle May, manager of the Highway Safety Program at Ohio's Department of Transportation.

But lowering speed limits on city streets is an important first step, one that will likely save lives. And it's especially meaningful to parents like Cohen and Hart, who are determined that no parent should suffer a loss like they did.

In a [video uploaded to X](#) following the passage of Sammy's Law, Cohen noted that her son would have been 24 this year, near the same age as some of the legislative staff she worked with to get the bill passed. “Sammy would have loved to be a changemaker,” she said. “For him, I will fight for change.”



At 6:14 am on May 15th, 2024, the Sidney Police Department received a report from the Delaware County 911 center regarding a pedestrian hit by a train on West Rd.

Officers quickly arrived at the location to find a Norfolk Southern train halted on the tracks. Subsequent investigation confirmed the tragic incident involved a woman struck at the West Rd railroad crossing, resulting in a fatality. The circumstances surrounding the event are currently being investigated.

The victim, identified as Nikita M. Burns, 34, of Sidney, has been named. No additional details are available for disclosure at present. We will update this article if more details arise.

The Sidney Police Department received support from the New York State Police, Sidney Fire Department, Sidney EMS, and Norfolk Southern Railroad Police at the scene.

LOCAL

NY awards \$10 million for Johnson City development: What projects are planned

Riccardo Monico

Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin

Johnson City has been awarded \$10 million to fund 15 projects aiming to restore and preserve historical areas as well as create new housing in the village thanks to New York's Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

The \$10 million comes as part of a \$19 million package for the Southern Tier, which also includes six projects for the Village of Montour Falls, and nine projects for the Village of Waverly, which both received \$4.5 million.

The Johnson City projects are designed to bring new life to the village's downtown area, with particular attention to rehabilitating historic buildings and pursuing mixed-income residential opportunities.

"New York is delivering vital support for New York's downtowns, the lifeblood of our communities," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement. "This funding for the Southern Tier will help communities carry out their plans to enhance the quality of life for New Yorkers, draw visitors, and spur economic opportunity in their downtowns to help the next generation of New Yorkers thrive."



Johnson City DRI project descriptions: What's planned

Here are the projects included in the DRI plan:

- \$1 million for a new 72-apartment mixed-income apartment building at 333 Grand Ave.
- \$500,000 for small projects such as individual building renovations and signage
- \$1,215,000 for parks and public areas including art installations in Jenison Park, street art and the completion of EJ Theme Park
- \$2,561,000 to improve pedestrian accessibility on downtown streets
- \$1,150,000 to convert a former Main Street high school into a 62-apartment complex with future commercial opportunities
- \$450,000 to renovate a mixed-use building at 214 Main St.

- \$652,000 to redesign Willbrow Alley into a public area, which will include new lightning, art and landscaping
- \$142,000 to replace the current HVAC system and complete renovations on the Mothers and Babies Perinatal Network of South Central New York, Inc.
- \$250,000 to renovate 15 Ave. B which will include six apartments alongside commercial opportunities
- \$750,000 to renovate the Helping Celebrate Abilities Building with a new roof, playground surface and parking surface
- \$150,000 for renovations to 13,000-square-foot business facility at 135 Baldwin St. including interior upgrades, storefront and roof, among other upgrades
- \$300,000 to expand breweries at the 135 Baldwin St. location, which will create higher production and a community participation element
- \$100,000 for interior and exterior renovations at 254 Main St.
- \$105,000 to renovate IBEW Local 10 non-profit building on Main Street, which will feature a new storefront, lightning and doors, among other improvements
- \$375,000 for interior and exterior renovations to 20 Willow St., which will function as a mixed-use building

What is the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)?

The DRI was created in 2016, with the goal of transforming downtown areas in every county in New York.

Through the first seven rounds of the DRI, New York has given \$800 million in funding for over 80 downtown areas, with Johnson City being selected in the sixth round.

LOCAL

These are the Waverly projects that will be paid for with \$4.5 million from NY Forward

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Friday announced funding for nine NY Forward projects in the Village of Waverly, including new housing construction and business renovations.

Chris Potter

Elmira Star-Gazette

The wait is over.

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Friday announced funding for nine NY Forward projects in the Village of Waverly, from transformations of Broad Street to new housing units and renovations of Soprano's Market.

Waverly was the Southern Tier's Round 1 winner of the \$4.5 million NY Forward award in early 2023, along with the Village of Montour Falls in Schuyler County. Project awards in Montour Falls and Johnson City, a Downtown Revitalization Initiative winner, were also announced Friday.

"New York is delivering vital support for New York's downtowns, the lifeblood of our communities," Hochul said. "This funding for the Southern Tier will help communities carry out their plans to enhance the quality of life for New Yorkers, draw visitors, and spur economic opportunity in their downtowns to help the next generation of New Yorkers thrive."

NY Forward was established in 2022, offering another funding avenue to complement the \$10 million DRI awards. The program targets revitalization projects in smaller, rural communities across the state.

"These dynamic, community-led Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward investments will further fuel the economic engines needed to support local businesses and foster economic growth," said Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight.

"The transformational and inclusive plans will infuse new life into the Johnson City, Montour Falls and Waverly communities, creating dynamic spaces and places that will benefit both current and future generations of residents."

Here are project descriptions and funding awards for the Waverly NY Forward Projects.

Enhance walkability, comfort on Broad Street through streetscape improvements



Provide physical streetscape improvements on Broad Street including but not limited to enhanced crosswalks, new sidewalks, pedestrian-level streetlighting with arms to hang flags or planters, curb bumpouts, signage, landscaping, street trees, benches and enhanced parking and open space.

This funding award is \$960,000.

Renovate East Waverly Park



Create a family and youth focused recreation facility with new pickle ball courts, a splash pad, walking trails, fishing holes, softball field, basketball court, playground, new parking area, and rehab of existing restroom and kitchen.

This funding award is \$1,196,000.

Establish Waverly waterfront access and trails



Create a new park on land bordered by the Chemung River that will encourage paddling, boating, fishing, hiking, and passive recreation in the Village of Waverly.

This funding award is \$795,000.

Renovate Soprano's Market and build an outdoor seating area



Upgrade the established Soprano's Market with a new outdoor patio, additional site lighting, new siding and insulation, roof replacement, and rehabilitation of the parking lot.

This funding award is \$420,000.

Upgrade historic building and create upper-level housing above an established sports bar

Build new fully furnished apartments on the vacant upper floors of a historic building on Broad St that also houses an established sports bar and create an outdoor deck in the rear of the building to be used by residents.

This funding award is \$156,000.



Convert a Victorian home into a multiuse residential and commercial space



Complete the final phases of a conversion of an historic Victorian home and neighboring vacant lot into a mixed use building with commercial space, upper floor apartment, and green space for outdoor gatherings.

This funding award is \$300,000.

Construct a multiuse commercial building in downtown Waverly

Construct a new mixed-use commercial space on Cayuta Ave to house a café, offices, retail shop, and rentable conference room.

This funding award is \$317,000.



Improve Fitness Center on Broad Street



Raise the interior ceiling at an established fitness center on Broad Street to allow for better air circulation in gym and other improvements including new glass doors and windows and new drainage onsite to prevent ice caused by flooding onsite.

This funding award is \$156,000.

Develop a Small Project Fund to help local businesses



Implement a grant fund for small projects in the NY Forward boundary that will support building renovations, facades, interior build outs, permanent equipment, awnings, and signage.

This funding award is \$200,000.

“These targeted, community-driven projects will benefit both residents and visitors alike, promoting economic growth and creating more vibrant downtowns where people will want to live, work, and play for generations to come,” said Judy McKinney-Cherry, Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair and Executive Director of Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development.

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Sunday, 2 June 2024

Memories fresh as Old Coot peddles *[pedals]* into past

I was 7 when I got my first bike, a used, single-speed, fat tire specimen. You engaged the brake by pushing the pedals backward. By the time I was 10, I'd completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in mechanics (bicycle mechanics). I took that bike apart dozens of times, to fix flats and adjust the handlebars and seat as I grew. When I wanted a racing bike, I removed the fenders and flipped the handlebars forward so I could lean over the front wheel like a real racer. When the fenders were on, I could carry a passenger on the back one, holding me around the waist. If a second friend came by, he sat on the handlebars, facing forward and yelling when we were about to crash into something. On the rare occasion when another friend joined us, he sat on the crossbar between the seat post and the handlebar post. Four on a bike! A lost art of the 1950s.

Like most kids of that era, I could ride facing backward, by standing on the pedals and leaning back to grip the handlebars. Needless to say, my parents spent a lot of money on Band-Aids, gauze, adhesive tape and iodine. But luckily, no time at the ER.

I found a three-speed, skinny tire, English bike with hand brakes under the tree the Christmas I turned 12. I transitioned from a 'pony' to a 'stallion.' Now, I could reach all neighborhoods in Binghamton, but most often, the First Ward pool. I went on to earn a 'master's degree' in bike mechanics. It served me well for the rest of my life, as did the basic carpentry skills I learned on the south side of Binghamton, building tree forts and soap box street racers. That three-speed bike introduced me to brake pad adjustment and replacement, generator light installation, brake and shift cable adjustment and spoke tuning. The latter, a necessity, after we loosened them up by fastening baseball cards into the spoke pathway to create a motor sound effect when we joined the rear of the parades through the downtown, our bikes decorated with red, white and blue crepe paper. Loose spokes could lead to a bent and ruined wheel, a repair cost I could not afford.

Now, in my 80s, I'm still riding, not a three-speed, but an 18-speed, though I only use three of them. Still getting that feeling of joy, gliding around with so little effort, fresh air blowing around me, a 12-year-old in an 81-year-old body. I'm that same kid again when I hop on a bicycle. In truth, there is no hopping,

just a big leg lift with hope that my feet land on the peddles. In a helmet? Of course not! I'm 12-years-old when I'm on my bike and it's 1954.

Merlin Lessler, also known as 'The Old Coot,' lives in Owego and is a frequent contributor to the Opinions section.

Bloomberg

US Edition



A cyclist rides on a cycle lane in the Bermondsey district in London in 2020. The UK capital has invested heavily in new places to bike, but women riders remain underrepresented.

Photographer: Jason Alden/Bloomberg

[Citylab](#) / Transportation

The Other Kind of Bike Infrastructure Cities Need

Bicycle skills training and education programs aimed at women and minority groups can help close cycling's stubborn access gaps and get more riders in the saddle.

By Alison Griswold / June 4, 2024 at 3:00 AM EDT

One sunny morning in London last spring, I spent three hours biking in circles around a neighborhood basketball court.

I had recently bought a bike and, determined to conquer my fear of cycling in a busy city, signed up for the [free lessons](#) offered through the local government in my home borough of Hackney. On my arrival at the Finsbury Park basketball courts, instructor Mario quickly sized up my lack of confidence and basic skills. (Him: "How do you feel about taking one hand off the handlebars?" Me: "Very bad.") Unfazed, he drilled me on hand signals,

shoulder checks and abrupt stops around the perimeter of the court. By the end of the session, I was signaling with style and ready to venture onto the road.

Like many cities, London doubled down on [cycling](#) during the pandemic. Since 2018, the UK capital has [added](#) more than 200 miles of designated cycle routes and 17,000 bike parking spaces, plus closed many streets to vehicle traffic in an effort to clear up vehicle emissions and make neighborhoods safer. This investment has [not been without controversy](#), but it has succeeded in growing the ranks of cyclists. Londoners took [1.26 million](#) cycle journeys a day in 2023, up 20% from before the pandemic and 6% over the previous year. Fewer cyclists are getting injured, on a percentage basis, and more than 70% of those using dedicated cycle routes report feeling safe.

But despite those gains, London's core cycling constituency remains [dominated](#) by men who are Whiter, wealthier, and younger than the general population.

This is where initiatives like free bike lessons take center stage. The social infrastructure of urban cycling — programs that give people the skills, tools and confidence to get on two wheels — can be just as important as physical infrastructure, especially when it comes to bridging access gaps.

“We sometimes talk about these things as being ‘activation’ projects,” says Chris Bennett, head of behavior change and engagement at UK inclusive mobility charity [Sustrans](#). “If you’re building infrastructure, how do you ensure it’s being used by as many people and as diverse a group of people as possible?”

A woman cyclist negotiates heavy traffic in London in 2022. Photo by Richard Baker / In Pictures via Getty Images

While bike trips rose across most demographics in London over the past decade, women and minorities remain underrepresented compared to White, male riders. A 2015 [paper](#) found that increased cycling in different parts of the UK didn't translate to women or older adults, leading the authors to conclude that “creating a mass cycling culture may require deliberately targeting infrastructure and policies towards currently under-represented groups.”



Similar gaps in ridership exist around the world. A 2021 [survey](#) of cycling behavior in 17 countries and 35 major cities found women biked as much as men when cycling's overall

mode share exceeded 7%. That might sound like a low bar, but only the bike-friendliest cities like Amsterdam, Osaka, and Munich clear it. In London, [cycling totaled 4.5% of trips in 2022](#), according to data from Transport for London.

A host of factors can discourage women from venturing into the streets on bikes. Female cyclists are twice as likely as men to be targeted with [hostility from drivers](#), a 2015 study found; verbal and [sexual harassment](#) are also frequently part of the commuting routine. Women are also [underrepresented in the transportation space](#) in general, from the policy world to the engineering, regulating and administration of city roadways. For many decades, the streets of cities around the world have largely been built around the mobility preferences of men.



In Helsinki, Finland, an immigrant woman takes part in the Let's Ride project, which offers free lessons to help newcomers adapt to life in the bike-loving nation.

Photographer: Alessandro Rampazzo/ AFP via Getty Images

To help close this gap and transform the culture of biking, education can play a big role, advocates say, by teaching people to be confident on a bike regardless of their background.

Nonprofit Bike New

York runs the largest free bike education program in the US and also organizes the flagship [TD Five Boro Bike Tour](#), a 40-mile ride around New York City each May that this year registered more than 32,000 participants. The advocacy group offers bike skills courses at 12 community education centers throughout the city.

Adult learn-to-ride classes are attended largely by women and people of color, according to CEO Ken Podziba, who previously [served as New York City sports commissioner](#). Each class starts with what he calls “group therapy,” where attendees talk about why they haven’t ridden a bike before. “We teach people not to be afraid,” Podziba says. “I always say fear is your worst enemy as a cyclist, and we alleviate the fear.”

In Washington, DC, [learn-to-ride classes](#) are offered across the greater metro area by the nonprofit Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Like Bike New York’s classes, WABA’s are attended mostly by women and African Americans. The courses are funded by local jurisdictions and the District Department of Transportation, and available at a subsidized rate of \$10 to residents and \$85 to everyone else.

WABA outreach director Renée Moore learned to ride a bike as an adult, during a date on the DC waterfront in her 20s. “I was just elated, like, oh my God, I finally learned,” she says.

Moore says most of WABA's participants learn within the three-hour session. "I think if cities are going to invest in something, it's something to think about in addition to infrastructure," she says. "Not that they shouldn't do infrastructure. But I think the idea that just building a bike lane and people will ride it is great for people who are already riding, but for people who would like to ride and don't know how to, it's never going to get them on a bike."

Students learn how to balance on bikes without pedals during an adult riding class offered by Washington Area Bicyclist Association. *Photo: Jared Soares for The Washington Post via Getty Images*



What limited data we have suggests these sorts of social and educational programs are more popular among groups historically underrepresented in cycling. In a 2022 [survey](#) of more than 13,000

respondents in New York State, 51% of women expressed interest in basic bike maintenance training compared to 38% of men, and more than 40% of women said they would like road skills training compared to less than 30% of men.

In the UK, Transport for London [reported](#) last June that uptake of adult cycle training sessions was "particularly strong among some traditionally under-represented cycling groups," with 76% female participants and more than 40% from Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority backgrounds. A 2020 Sustrans [report](#) similarly found that 55% of people from ethnic minority backgrounds who don't currently cycle would like to start, but a third doubted their abilities.

Other groups like London's Cycle Sisters focus on supporting specific communities. Founded in 2016, Cycle Sisters leads over 500 social bike rides a year for Muslim women. Rides are run by volunteers — also Muslim women — and arranged around prayer times and to include stops at Halal coffee shops. Deryn Ellis, one of the volunteer ride leaders, said she was initially nervous to get back to cycling in 2020. "I wear a headscarf, and I was worried that with the head scarf and potential road rage, I would be more of a target," Ellis says. "But going to a group like Cycle Sisters where the group leaders are so inspirational, not only did they inspire me, but having so many positive experiences made me less worried over time."



A participant in a cycling course in Germany in 2021. Photo by Uwe Anspach/picture alliance via Getty Images

I came across London's cycling classes last year while browsing free local government [services](#). In addition to adult cycling lessons, Hackney offers "Dr. Bike" — a weekly pop-up where qualified mechanics will fix your bike for free — and a monthly bike mechanics course at a community

center. I signed up for all of it. I had a second session with Mario where we cycled around my neighborhood to practice road positioning, U-turns, and navigating intersections. I stopped by a Dr. Bike tent outside a community gym on a rainy afternoon where a cheerful female mechanic swapped out my worn brake pads with new ones for free.

One Saturday morning last August, I traveled to the community center to take the free bike mechanics course. Over the next four hours, the instructor, Festus Williams, walked me and three other attendees through how to change a tire, find and repair a punctured tube, and fix our brakes. After several attempts, I prised the tire off my rear wheel only to have all of the rim tape fall off too. Williams was delighted. "It's nice to see this isn't one of those sessions where everything is going perfectly," he said. At the end of class, we each got sent home with a patch kit and multi-tool.

At the weekly "Dr. Bike" sessions in Hackney, mechanics offer free community lessons in cycle repair and maintenance. Photo: Alison Griswold/Bloomberg CityLab

The goal of these services is to make cycling feel normal and safe, said Richard Tarrant, assistant cycle training manager with Hackney Council. "There's a massive cohort of potential cyclists out there who are adults who cycled as a kid but then look at the roads and find the leap into urban city



traffic initially off-putting,” he said. “If we can make your brakes work and your bike safe, then everything you know about cycle safety dovetails.”

But cycling instruction for adults is rare and underfunded compared to programs for children and schools. Boston, Massachusetts, last year debuted plans for [free bike lessons](#) for children ages 4 to 13. [France’s ambitious Plan Vélo](#) includes bike training for all primary schoolchildren. England’s national scheme to teach children to ride, Bikeability, is funded by the government and offered in most primary schools. There isn’t a comparable program for adults, with training instead left to local councils with limited resources. In Hackney, for instance, Tarrant said Dr. Bike service will likely be reduced due to funding cuts.



Riders take part in a mass protest on March 2023 that called for safer cycling for women in London. *Photographer: Jordan Pettitt - PA Images via Getty Images*

Earlier this month, I got an opportunity to use my new skills: My bike was reclined in a sunny spot in the park when the rear tire suddenly sighed out all its air. After walking it home and ordering a new set of rubber online, I set my bike up to repair on the sidewalk outside my

flat. I watched a few YouTube tutorials, struck by how difficult it was to find one with a woman rather than a man in spandex, and reviewed my grease-stained notes on patching a puncture from last summer’s class.

Just as I got the rear wheel off, an older lady stopped by to ask if I knew there was a man who fixed bikes just down the road. “Thanks, I do know that,” I told her. “But this I can do myself.”

City of Binghamton Unanimously Wins Binghamton Plaza Case

Spencer Gustafson

BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (WIVT/WBGH) — The City of Binghamton is one step closer to realizing its restoration project for the “dilapidated” Binghamton Plaza.

The New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division unanimously voted in favor of the city’s eminent domain proceedings against the owners of the Binghamton Plaza. This ruling

allows for Binghamton to take ownership of the Plaza and use the property as a space for redevelopment or additional greenspace connecting to the adjacent Cherie Lindsay Park and river walk, as well as fixing up sidewalks and other amenity and facility improvements.

The court rejected the owner's claims of the city not using correct procedure, using eminent domain as an excessive or improper method without a specific outline of future plans for the property, and not meeting requirements of SEQRA.

As far as environmental concerns, the courts found that "while the Plaza's land would be greatly impacted, it would change for the better: over 1,000 tons of ash would be taken from the ground and replaced with topsoil, which would be seeded. There would be no significant impact from removing these materials because [the city] would follow state requirements. Likewise, this project would improve soil erosion and drainage issues, as there would, after the project, be clean topsoil instead of the ashy remains of the garbage incinerator's debris. Because the Plaza already had a large parking lot, vegetation and wildlife had already been disturbed and the current project would do no further harm," according to the official ruling.

Known as the city's biggest eyesore, this ruling comes over a year after Mayor Kraham and the Binghamton City Council [hosted a public hearing to address the issue](#). Binghamton residents are one step closer to resolving this problem.

The shopping plaza, which was built on top of an old city dump, has been in steady decline for roughly 30 years, with Grand Union closing in 1996 and K-Mart going out of business in 2016. Since then, the 285,000 square foot strip mall has been deteriorating, with portions of the back wall collapsing.

Kraham says the plaza, which is visible to motorists passing on Route 17, creates a terrible image for the city.

"This is the namesake plaza for the city of Binghamton. It's the Binghamton Plaza. Binghamton deserves better than that. We should have, and residents deserve, the best. This should be a site of waterfront redevelopment, of expanded park space and new economic opportunity to serve the residents of the City of Binghamton and beyond. This should be a destination as it once was when it first opened as a shopping plaza many decades ago, and it still has that promise," Kraham said.

Kraham pledged support to assist the few remaining businesses, like New York Pizzeria, with finding a new location. The Mayor says it could still take several months to acquire the property and that an appraisal will determine its worth.

He doesn't expect any demolition until next year. Kraham already plans to expand neighboring Cheri Lindsey Park and create better access to the riverwalk. Plus the city is interested in new commercial development.

Galesi Realty Asset Manager Mike Tomasulo tells News 34 that the company's lawyers are weighing their options.
