

Cycling News

DOT Responds to NYC Bike Safety Action Plan

OVER THE FALL, THE NYC Department of Transportation responded to the New York City Bike Safety Action Plan, the six-point strategy that T.A. and a coalition of bicycling groups developed in response to the recent rise in bicyclist deaths.

The DOT's response touches on about half of the requests in the Plan. The agency will:

- **Conduct a study of bicyclist fatalities and injuries** with the New York City Department of Health and NYPD.
- **Work with government agencies and advocates** to develop a bike safety public awareness outreach campaign geared towards both drivers and bikers.
- **Work with the Department of Health and advocates** to encourage helmet use and cycling for fitness.
- **Conduct bicyclist safety trainings for truck and heavy vehicle drivers** at the DOT, NYPD, Fire Department, and Departments of Sanitation, Parks and Environmental Protection.
- **Adopt new "share the road"**



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signs and increase use of colored (green) bike lanes and bike pavement markings.

- **Pursue truck safety legislation.**

The City's bicyclist fatality and injury study will help government and the public identify the

root causes of cyclist crashes. The study should recommend both immediate and longer-term infrastructure, enforcement and promotional actions to prevent bicyclist crashes, deaths and injuries

and make streets safe for biking.

The DOT gets good marks for reaching out to advocates to develop a bike safety public awareness outreach campaign and encourage helmet use. The associated goals of these initiatives should be to urge drivers to respect cyclists and

to encourage more New Yorkers to regularly ride bikes, for research shows that there is "safety in numbers." Increasing cycling increases the safety of individual cyclists because more cyclists on the streets means

drivers are more used to looking for cyclists and driving safely near them. And, while encouraging helmet use is key, mandating that adults wear helmets will deter many New Yorkers from cycling and reduce the "safety in numbers" effect. Though helmets greatly improve cyclist's safety, they do not prevent collisions, safe streets do.

T.A. and other bike groups will continue to push the City to take action on the parts of the Bike Safety Action Plan to which it has not yet responded:

- **Aggressive police enforcement of drivers who endanger cyclists.** (Note: the DOT has no traffic enforcement power, so the NYPD must respond to this request.)
- **Committing to implement the New York City Bike Master Plan** by 2010 and publicly review progress on the Bike Master Plan by June 2006.
- **Increasing the number of City employees working on bicycling issues** and reinstating the New York City Bike Advisory Council with public meetings. □

9th Precinct Tags Abandoned Bikes

THE NYPD'S 9TH PRECINCT (Manhattan's East Village) has started an exemplary program to tag and clear abandoned bikes from bike racks and other street fixtures. This program should be expanded to other precincts and used as the basis for citywide outdoor bike parking rules.

Officers from the 9th Precinct affix tags to suspected abandoned bicycles, informing the owner that the bike will be removed in two weeks. Officers tag bikes that have elicited complaints or show signs of disuse like stripped parts, flat tires or rusted chains. If the

owner does not remove the bike in two weeks, the 9th Precinct and the Department of Sanitation clip the lock and Sanitation carts the bike away.

City Hall or City Council should base citywide outdoor bike parking rules on this program. Like the Department of Sanitation (see inset) and the Parks Department (see *T.A. Magazine*, Winter 2005), the 9th Precinct program recognizes the chronic bike rack shortage, allowing people to park their bikes at City-owned street fixtures and seeking only to remove bikes that are clearly abandoned, blocking the sidewalk



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or locked to a tree. Importantly, this program gives adequate notice before removing bikes. Abandoned bikes take up valuable bike parking spaces and block the sidewalk, endangering pedestrians. Citywide rules will help end ticketing and bike seizures, which discourage biking.

Immediately, the NYPD should expand the 9th Precinct's program to areas fraught with abandoned bikes, starting with Brooklyn's 94th Precinct, where officers have seized parked bikes without any warning or notice. □

Sanitation's Parking Clarification

In 2004, T.A. asked City agencies to clarify their outdoor bike parking rules. The Department of Sanitation responded that it has none. So, in October 2005, when Sanitation ticketed businesses for bikes parked at signposts and parking meters in front of them, T.A. asked Sanitation if something had changed and to stop.

At a January meeting, Sanitation officials reiterated that the department has no specific bike parking rules and, thus, has told enforcement agents to not ticket individuals' parked bikes.

Sanitation may ticket businesses if their delivery and other commercial bicycles block the sidewalk, just as it tickets businesses for signs and other stands that extend more than three-feet onto the sidewalk.

TakeAction!

Write to Commissioner Kelly and ask the NYPD to expand the bike tagging program.

Commissioner Raymond Kelly
New York City Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038
nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mailnypd.html

TakeAction!

Write Mayor Bloomberg and thank the DOT for these initial steps and urge him to adopt the entire NYC Bike Safety Action Plan.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007
nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mayor.html

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DOT swapped parking spaces for safe cycling space in Downtown Brooklyn.

Less Parking Makes Tillary, Clinton More Bike-Friendly

IN NOVEMBER, THE DOT prioritized cyclist safety ahead of car parking by upgrading the Clinton Street bike lane and installing a new on-street greenway path on Tillary Street in Brooklyn, leading to the Brooklyn Bridge bike path. The new bike lane and path are both curbside and displace parked cars, greatly improving the safety of cyclists going to and from the bridge.

On Clinton Street, between Joralemon Street and Cadman Plaza West, the DOT moved the existing bike lane from the

east side of the street to the west side's curb, so it is in line with the preceding one and a half miles of bike lane. Now, cyclists do not have to risk cutting across traffic to stay in the bike lane. Because the upgraded bike lane runs along the curb, not between the parking and travel lanes, cyclists are at less risk of being struck by a driver pulling in or out of a parking space or being "doored" by someone disembarking from a car.

TakeAction!

Thank the DOT for the Clinton and Tillary Street improvements.

Commissioner Iris Weinsahl
NYC DOT
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10007

The Bike Strikes Back: Lessons Learned from Biking the Strike

DURING DECEMBER'S transit strike the City's contingency plans treated bike riders to a taste of what cycling should be: inviting and safe for all New Yorkers. Ample safe street space and secure bike parking attracted new bicyclists in droves.

The City should learn from its transit strike plans. Creating more safe space for biking, better protected bike lanes and secure bike parking at work will encourage many more New Yorkers to ride regularly.

During the strike, five times as many New Yorkers rode bikes than on an average day. Each of the four East River bridges carried approximately 1,000 bicyclists an hour dur-

ing peak commute times. And weeks after the strike, T.A. counted 10-30% more cyclists than average crossing the East River bridges during peak times.

The City offered bicyclists access on 5th and Madison Avenues and a dozen other streets in Midtown and Lower Manhattan, which, because they were reserved for emergency vehicles and commuter vans, were almost traffic free. The City

TakeAction!

Write to: Mayor Michael Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007
nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mayor.html

also coned-off bike lanes and prohibited parking next to them and provided secure bike parking in parks throughout the day.

Write to Mayor

The strike gave many New Yorkers their first taste of bike commuting.

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The DOT removed 20 parking spaces and built an innovative on-street greenway along the north curb of Tillary Street, between the Clinton Street bike lane at Cadman Plaza West and the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge path at Adams Street. The two-way greenway is 12 feet wide and physically separated from traffic by Jersey barriers.

The Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge is the most dangerous intersection for cyclists in Brooklyn. Between 1995 and 2004 motorists hit 23 cyclists there.

The DOT's new bike lane-bridge connection will improve safety for many of the 2,000 cyclists who cross the Brooklyn Bridge each day. Now, the agency should release its study of the proposed fly-over ramp between the bridge path and Cadman Plaza Park, which, when built, will improve safety and access for all 5,000 bikers and walkers who cross the bridge each day.

Put Street Inspectors Back in the Saddle

WINTER'S FREEZES AND thaws make New York City streets fertile ground for potholes. To prevent cyclist crashes and damaged bicycles this spring, the DOT must reinstate its bicycle-borne Highway Inspection and Quality Assurance (HIQA) program and inspect and repair bike lanes and heavily-cycled routes like bridge



NOAH BUDNICK

Motorists do not always notice street defects that endanger cyclists.

approaches and streets that connect to greenways. Potholes and street defects that are imperceptible from behind the windshield can easily cause cyclists to crash.

Only a bike-borne DOT street inspector can closely observe and catalog the many street defects that seem insignificant from a car but present very real dangers to cyclists. On a single afternoon in November, T.A.'s Operation Hazard ID identified twenty-five dangerous street hazards, which would be easily missed in a car, in twenty-three blocks of Manhattan bike lanes.

The DOT's original bike-borne street inspector program started in 1991 but was cancelled in 1997 despite its great success in fixing dangerous street defects. It is imperative that the DOT ensures the integrity of the roadway surface by putting street inspectors back on bikes.

TakeAction!

Write to: Acting Assistant Commissioner Vincent Maniscalco
HIQA Unit, NYC Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013
nyc.gov/html/mail/html/maildot.html

Bloomberg and urge the City to continue to reap the benefits of bicycling! Ask the Mayor to:

- **Mandate bike access** in buildings.
- Create more and better **protected bike lanes**.
- **Increase police enforcement** to keep bike lanes safe and clear.
- **Create safe routes** to and from greenway paths and the East River bridge biking and walking paths.

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Buffered Bike Lane Coming to 8th Ave?

THE DOT IS MOVING forward with its plans to stripe a new bike lane on Manhattan's 8th Avenue from 14th to 57th Street. Cyclists, Community Board 4, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Councilmember Gale Brewer, the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association and T.A.

all want the DOT to stripe a buffered bike lane. On wide and heavily trafficked 8th Avenue a buffered bike lane—a five-foot bike lane separated from moving traffic by a two- to three-foot striped buffer zone—will be far safer and encourage more people to ride than a standard five-foot bike lane.

In December, CB 4 wrote to the DOT saying, "a buffered [bike] lane would enhance bicycle safety and enable a smoother flow of auto traffic," and a buffer zone "would greatly increase safety for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists."

A buffer zone is a stronger visual separation between bike lanes and moving car traffic than standard bike lane striping. It keeps drivers from encroaching into the bike lane endangering cyclists and forcing them into the "door" zone. Car doors are a leading cause of bike crashes in New York City.

The new bike lane will connect the Hudson Street buffered bike lane to Central Park and the Central Park West/Frederick Douglas Boulevard/St. Nicholas Avenue bike lanes. In Midtown, it will offer a much needed alternative to the sub-standard 6th Avenue lane, reduce sidewalk cycling and make 8th Avenue traffic safer for everyone.

TakeAction!

Support a buffered bike lane!

Write to: Manhattan Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgiione, NYC DOT, 40 Worth Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10013 (212) 442-7447
nyc.gov/html/mail/html/maildot.html

Shore Parkway Reconstruction: A Study in Contrasts

THANKS TO FAST ACTION and \$5 million in funding secured by Congressman Vito Fosella, the NYC Parks Department will repair and re-open a substantial portion of the Shore Parkway Greenway in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn by June 2006. Parts of the greenway are closed because they are collapsing into Upper New York Bay.

Unfortunately, the City has not made any progress fixing the greenway in Jamaica

Bay. Between Pennsylvania Avenue and Erskine Street, the Shore Parkway Greenway is dangerously narrow and unpaved, and there is no physical barrier separating greenway users from adjacent highway traffic. Fortunately, simple solutions to this unacceptable danger are readily available to Parks and the DOT: they must immediately widen and pave the Shore Parkway Greenway here and erect jersey barriers to separate bikers and walkers from speeding traffic.

According to DOT staff, the agency's forthcoming Belt Parkway Master Plan will include improvements for this dangerous half-mile of greenway, but the agency has yet to release the plan.

TakeAction!

Write to: Brooklyn Borough Commissioner Lori Ardito NYC Department of Transportation 16 Court Street, Brooklyn, NY 11241 nyc.gov/html/mail/html/maildot.html

City Planning Wants to Connect Shore Parkway Greenway to More of Brooklyn

IN OCTOBER, THE DEPARTMENT of City Planning released the Shore Parkway



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T.A.'s Street Activist Network puts public pressure on key officials to improve walking and bicycling. Take five minutes of action to help win safer, saner streets and parks. Join the Network at transalt.org/takeaction/streetactivistnetwork.

Greenway Connector Master Plan. The planned connector will bridge the 5-mile gap in the Shore Parkway Greenway between Bath Beach and Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn and connect to the Ocean Parkway Greenway, the Bedford and Oriental Avenue bike lanes and the Coney Island Boardwalk. The full plan, funded with federal clean air dollars, recommends shared lane facilities with 12-foot tall bicycle pavement symbols and colored pavement bike lanes in the short term and physically separated on- and off-street greenway paths in the long term. The next step is for the DOT and elected officials to secure funding to build this link in the New York City bicycle network. Read the plan: nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/spgc.shtml.

TakeAction!

Write to: Congressman Anthony Weiner, 1800 Sheepshead Bay Road, Brooklyn, NY 11235 weiner@mail.house.gov

Brooklyn Bikers Give Respect, Get Respect

In December, T.A. organized Give Respect/Get Respect events at the Clinton Street and 5th Avenue bike lanes in Downtown Brooklyn. During the events, T.A. staff and volunteers distributed information to make motorists aware of common traffic violations that endanger cyclists, including double parking, cutting off bikers, speeding, reckless driving, "dooring" and driving and parking in bike lanes. Passing cyclists were reminded of the importance of yielding to pedestrians, staying off sidewalks and riding with, not against, traffic. To amplify our efforts to improve safety, the **NYPD must undertake an aggressive, ongoing enforcement campaign** to deter drivers from illegal behaviors that put cyclists and pedestrians



DAVID SNETMAN

in danger, starting in precincts with large numbers of bicyclists in Manhattan, West Brooklyn and the South Bronx.

TakeAction!

Write to: Commissioner Ray Kelly, New York Police Department, 1 Police Plaza, New York, NY 10038, nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mailnypd.html. E-mail bike@transalt.org for more on the next Give/Get event!

State Assembly Nixes UN Reconstruction, Greenway

IN 2005, THE CITY BROKERED a deal with the United Nations to include a segment of the Mayor's Manhattan Waterfront Greenway in the UN's expansion plans. Last fall, T.A. Magazine reported that the plans awaited the state legislature's approval, and in November, the State Assembly rejected legislation necessary for the UN's expansion. Fortunately, however, the greenway plan developed by the City and the UN shows that the UN's security concerns, initially cited as the reason why the greenway could not cross UN property, can be successfully abated. City Planning should continue to work with the UN and state legislators to build the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway between East 41st and 51st Streets.

TakeAction!

Write to: Commissioner Amanda Burden, NYC Department of City Planning, 22 Reade Street, New York, NY 10007, nyc.gov/html/mail/html/maildcp.html □