

Cycling News

New Commercial Cycling Laws Aim to Improve Pedestrian, Cyclist Safety

ON MARCH 28TH, MAYOR Bloomberg signed two City Council bills into law that regulate bike messengers, food-delivery and other working cyclists and their employers. According to Mayor Bloomberg, these new laws will help improve the safety of working cyclists and pedestrians.

One law, championed by Councilmember Gale Brewer and modeled on T.A.'s Working Cyclist Safety campaign, requires businesses to download, print and display multilingual posters designed by the DOT to educate them and their commercial cyclists about safe cycling, pedestrian safety, commercial cycling laws and the rules of the road. The other law, pushed by Councilmember Alan Gerson, requires businesses to outfit their working cyclists with helmets, lights and bells and ensure that workers use them and that their bikes are in safe working order. While the Council passed both laws with the intention of improving safety, business compliance and NYPD enforcement at the business-level will determine if this legislation is effective or not.

The Restaurant Opportunities Center, the Bicycle Messenger Foundation and T.A. all urged the City to ensure that enforcement of the new and pre-existing commercial cycling laws be focused on business owners and managers, not on workers. Owners and managers have the biggest influence on their employees' safety because they can use the power of the purse to compel their workers to follow the rules. In contrast, many delivery cyclists usually disregard NYPD summonses. Furthermore, NYPD enforcement at the business-level is more effective and efficient than police officers stopping individual cyclists. Because one business usually employs multiple working cyclists and because worker turnover is high,

New NYC law requires business owners to outfit their working cyclists with helmets and other safety gear.



DAN SIMONS

it makes more sense for police to make sure owners and managers follow the rules and impress them on their workers. Because many commercial cyclists do not

speak English and are undocumented workers, it is problematic and inefficient for NYPD officers to summon individuals.

Cyclists who ride on sidewalks and the wrong way, disregard traffic laws and endanger pedestrians are longtime quality of life problems in Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn and northwest Queens neighborhoods. For years, businesses have been required by law to provide ID cards and identifying apparel for their working cyclists and identification for their bicycles

and to keep a logbook of their deliveries. However, these laws are almost never enforced by the NYPD, nor does the department regularly track summonses for these violations.

In order to improve commercial cyclist safety and the safety of pedestrians in relation to working cyclists, the City must not only enforce these new and pre-existing laws at the business-level, but also work with commercial cycling organizations and businesses to collect detailed data on working cyclists safety and the safety of pedestrians in relation to them, analyze it and release it to the public.

Like the longstanding laws aimed at improving the safety of pedestrians in relation to delivery cyclists, the efficacy of these new rules hinges not on their passage into law, but on businesses' compliance, government's attention span and NYPD enforcement at the business-level. □

Restrictive Regulations Could Strangle Pedicab Industry

BREAKING NEWS: As we went to print, the City Council overrode the Mayor's veto and voted to enact these regressive pedicab regulations.

NEW YORK CITY IS known for having a tough regulatory environment for businesses. In March new legislation regulating commercial cycling was in the spotlight at City Hall with Mayor Bloomberg temporarily putting the brakes on one proposed measure that would limit and reduce non-polluting, city-friendly transportation: pedicabs.

On March 14th, for the first time under Christine Quinn's tenure as City Council Speaker, Mayor Bloomberg withheld his signature on a bill put forth by the City Council, Intro 331A. Then on March 30th, in what New York City Pedicab Owners Association President Peter Meitzler called "not just a victory for the pedicab industry, but for all entrepreneurs who want a fair shot at establishing and growing a small business in New York," Mayor Bloomberg vetoed Intro 331A.

If enacted, the bill would

strangle the city's growing pedicab industry by capping the number of pedicabs at 325, banning electric-assist motors and giving the NYPD power to ban pedicabs from certain streets at will. With his veto, the Mayor noted that it should be the "free

Speaker Quinn said that the full City Council would "consider" overriding the Mayor's veto.

With political, planning, development, economic, health and environmental discussions increasingly focusing on how to



PETER MEITZLER

market" that dictates the number of pedicabs on the street, not regulations imposed by the City, and asked for the regulations to be re-written either without a cap or with a more reasonable number. Meanwhile, Council

accommodate New York City's growth over the coming decades, it only makes sense for the City to encourage pedicabs and other modes of transportation that make efficient use of limited street

space and do not pollute. Limiting pedicabs and restricting their use is anti-environment, anti-small business and inconsistent with the Mayor's long-term planning and sustainability initiative, PlaNYC. □

Long Island City: A Great Place to Ride, and Someday, Park Your Bike

LONG ISLAND City, Queens, is fast becoming a hot neighborhood for cyclists. Its allure is due in part because it is a transit hub connecting Western Queens neighborhoods like Hunter's Point, Queens Plaza, Astoria, Sunnyside and Woodside with Manhattan, and in part because many jobs, restored parks and cultural destinations bring more workers and visitors than ever before. New bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements at Queens Plaza and the Queensboro Bridge will encourage even more people to bike to and in Long Island City. While there are growing numbers of commuters, workers and visitors traveling around the area by bike, many of them are finding there is no safe place to park and many more potential riders are deterred by the fear of having their bikes stolen.

In consultation with Long Island City BID, Long Island City Cultural Alliance, the Queens Community Board 2 Land Use Committee, NYC Department of City Planning, and T.A.'s new Astoria/Long Island City volunteer committee, T.A. has developed a proposal for a secure bike parking facility in the Court Square Municipal Parking Garage. Lack of secure bike parking is the most common reason that people do not bike to work in NYC, and many cities around the U.S., including Chicago, IL, Seattle, WA and Berkeley, CA, have overcome this barrier by installing "bike-stations" at or near heavily used public transit stations.

Bikestations vary in their appearance and range of services offered, but all provide bike owners with an indoor



Chicago's downtown bike station makes it easier for people to bike to work.

CITY OF CHICAGO

and secure place to park their bicycles before heading to a neighborhood destination or onto a public transit connection. As New York City looks to

dramatically cut emissions and improve air quality, it is essential to provide easy connections between bicycling and transit to improve access to transit and make biking a viable, safe and practical alternative to driving. A bikestation in Long Island City is a commonsense step toward urban sustainability.

This summer T.A. will be administering surveys at popular destinations in and around Long Island City, at transit loca-

tions around Court Square and through the websites of the BID, the Cultural Alliance and other

TakeAction!

Make Queens a better place to bike!
 Help T.A.'s Astoria/Long Island City Committee survey cyclists about how to improve Western Queens cycling.
 E-mail: volunteer@transalt.org

local institutions and businesses. The survey will identify the transportation needs and practices of people in the Court Square area, as well as inform the final bikestation proposal to be presented to the Community

Board, elected officials and the City. The creation of a bikestation at Court Square Municipal Garage will encourage cycling for daily transportation, provide links between neighborhoods and cultural destinations and create a model that can be repeated at other locations around New York City as a means of helping to make Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC sustainability initiative a reality. □

Bikers and Walkers Welcome if Kosciuszko Bridge is Replaced

IN APRIL, THE NEW YORK State DOT released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Kosciuszko Bridge Project, and, while the project's main focus is the rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge (estimated to cost between \$500 million and \$700 million), the agency wisely included a bicycle and pedestrian path in all three bridge replacement options. The State should seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a much needed biking and walking path over Newtown Creek, connecting Brooklyn and Queens.

In early 2002, when the State DOT began scoping the project, T.A. asked the agency to look for opportunities to include a bik-



NYC DOT AND DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

ing and walking path in the new bridge design. Built in 1939, the Kosciuszko Bridge—a one-mile segment of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, which crosses over Newtown Creek between Maspeth, Queens and East Williamsburg, Brooklyn—has never had bicyclist and pedestrian access.

Building a biking and walking path on a new Kosciuszko Bridge is a rare opportunity to greatly improve transportation in neighborhoods that are underserved by transit yet very bikeable. The bridge is close to a mile and a half from both the Greenpoint Avenue and Grand Street bridges, both of which are passable but far from welcoming to bikers and walkers. It is

two and a half miles from the Pulaski Bridge, which connects Greenpoint and Long Island City at the north end of Newtown Creek, and to navigate around the southern end of Newtown Creek (known as English Kills), cyclists and pedestrians must detour two miles from the Kosciuszko.

This spring and summer the State DOT will hold public hearings and solicit comments on the project, and in the fall the State is scheduled to decide whether to replace the bridge, rehabilitate it or do nothing. □

TakeAction!

Urge the State DOT to build a bicycle and pedestrian path into the Kosciuszko's future!

Contact:
 Robert Adams, P.E.,
 Project Manager,
 NYS Department of
 Transportation
 Hunters Point Plaza
 47-40 21st Street
 Long Island City, NY 11101
 Phone 718-482-4683
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 E-mail kosciuszko@dot.state.ny.us

Cycling News

Waterfront Parks Grow on the Harlem River



Access must be made safer and more convenient so more people will use the new section of Harlem River Park between 135th & 139th Streets.

FRANCISCO GUZMAN, HARLEM CDC

ONCE COMPLETED HARLEM River Park will connect with the East River Greenway (which runs from 63rd to 125th Street) and extend the car-free route on the waterfront to 145th Street. In consultation with the Harlem River Park Taskforce, the City is developing this twenty-acre park on the Manhattan-side of the Harlem River. The first phase of the park, from 135th to 139th Street, was completed in November 2002 but is underused because of a combination of dangerous access, lack of signage directing people to the park and inadequate access and lighting. Construction of Phase II is underway between 139th and 145th Streets and access to Phase III, between 125th and 135th Streets, will be blocked until 2012 while the DOT uses it as a construction staging area. As park planning and development moves forward, advocates, community groups, elected officials and City agencies must work to make park and greenway access convenient and safe.

Now, T.A. is working with other Harlem River Park Taskforce members to improve access to Phase I of the park, also known as Harlem River Park Esplanade. We are developing redesigns of two dangerous intersections that discourage park use—135th Street & Madison Avenue and 142nd Street & 5th Avenue—and will propose them to the DOT for implementation. One cyclist or pedestrian is hit a year at each intersection, and

senior citizens living in the area report that the lack of crossing time prevents them from walking across the street to access the park. T.A. will also look to

Parade Permit Rules in Effect, Cyclists Sue NYPD

ON FEBRUARY 25TH, THE NYPD's regressive parade permit rules went into effect, requiring permits and NYPD-approved routes for all formal and informal bike rides of fifty or more people. If the group does not obtain a permit or people stray from the police-approved route, even if they are obeying all laws, every rider will be subject to arrest.

In late March, in a testament to the broad disapproval of the new rules, the Five Borough Bicycle Club and cyclists filed suit against the City of New York, the NYPD and several police officers. The plaintiffs "seek to vindicate their right to bicycle in groups of 50 or more persons." T.A. and a diverse group of cyclists—from professors to artists to everyday bike commuters—submitted declarations in support of the plaintiffs. The lawsuit recognizes, as most do, that the NYPD's new rules are an attempt to dismantle monthly Critical Mass bike rides, and also highlights the detrimental impact of the permit rules on all NYC cyclists.

TakeAction!

Find updates on this important case at: 5bbc.org

improve signage, maintenance and lighting, the lack of which contribute to the community's inability to safely access and enjoy Harlem River Park.

NYC Parks Department's construction of Phase II of Harlem

River Park is underway between 139th and 142nd Streets and will be completed next year. This section

is a model for greenway development, not only because of the ways it explores the relationship between the natural and built environment, but also because

it integrated community input through a group process. The outcome is Designing the Edge. With the NYC EDC's new stretch of greenway from 142nd to 145th Street, Designing the Edge will bring much needed car-free walking and biking space in Harlem.

The Harlem River Park Task Force, formed in December 2001, is a community-based group comprised of a growing membership of local, city and regional organizations and elected officials. It has been instrumental in generating support for the construction of Phase I, funding for Phases II and III and is working closely with NYC Parks Department to design the park. □

TakeAction!

Learn more about the Harlem River Park Task Force and get involved at:

www.harlemcdc.org/Planning/planning_hr_park.htm

STREET WITH ACTIVIST

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.

Greenpoint and Williamsburg: Help Plan the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway

ON MAY 24TH, THE Brooklyn Greenway Initiative and the Regional Plan Association will host a community workshop to plan the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway through Community Board 1 in Williamsburg and Greenpoint. If you live, work or spent significant time in North Brooklyn, please attend and help shape the greenway. While the City's rezoning of Williamsburg and Greenpoint included new parks and open space, specific greenway routes and other design elements have not been finalized, and this workshop will invite input on these elements.

TakeAction!

Attend the workshop!

May 24th, 6pm, Brooklyn Brewery
79 North 11th Street, between Berry & Wythe, Williamsburg, Brooklyn
Please RSVP to info@brooklyngreenway.org

City Planning Releases Bronx Harlem River Access Study

LAST FALL, THE NYC Department of City Planning released its Bronx Harlem River Waterfront Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, plans for a 2.3-mile on- and off-street cycling route near the Harlem River between the Macombs Dam and the Triborough Bridges in the Bronx. This heavily industrialized waterfront currently has neither public access nor connections to inland neighborhoods or to bridges across the Harlem River. The route is part of the City's official 1993 Greenway Master Plan and its 1997 Bicycle Master Plan, as well as City Planning's 1993 and 2004 Bronx waterfront plans. These improvements have tremendous potential to promote biking and walking in the southwest Bronx.

TakeAction!

Read the plan at: nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/transportation/td_bx_harlem_river.shtml

Local Support Wins Improvements

On-street bike lanes are the core of the city's bicycle network. They encourage New Yorkers to take to two wheels, raise public awareness about cycling and improve safety. A key finding of the City's bike crash report issued last fall is that bike lanes reduce the risk of fatal bike crashes with motorists. However, when the DOT presents bike lane plans to Community Boards, board members and representatives from block associations and neighborhood civic groups often oppose them. Though most cyclists take the need for bike lanes for granted, recent experiences show support from people who live, work and bike in the area is crucial at these meetings.

This spring, the DOT is rolling out commonsense bike lanes on 20th and 21st Streets in Manhattan, connecting the

East River and Hudson River Greenways, the Broadway, 5th, 6th and 8th Avenue bike lanes and all the neighborhoods in between. These five-foot wide

Board 6 on the East Side raised many concerns with the agency and took no action.

Three years ago, after a driver slammed through the front door

Board 6 residents who wrote to the board, the board was swayed by drivers who oppose the DOT's improvements, claiming the safer design would deprive them of illegal double-parking. But, the DOT showed that from 2004 to 2006 fifty-eighty walk-



AARON NARPSTEK



PAUL S. WHITE

Now: 9th Street in Park Slope is too wide and encourages drivers to speed. Coming soon from the DOT: A median and buffered bike lanes will improve safety for walkers, bikers and motorists

Now: 187 parking spaces in SoHo and Greenwich Village. Coming soon from the DOT: Bike lanes on Prince, Bleecker and connecting streets

lanes will also slow drivers. While Manhattan Community Board 4 on the West Side offered support and recommendations for the DOT's plan, Community

of Dizzy's restaurant on 9th Street in Brooklyn, residents and businesses petitioned the DOT for safety improvements. This March, the DOT presented a

strong safety plan for 9th Street, between Prospect Park West and 3rd Avenue, to Brooklyn Community Board 6's Transportation Committee. The agency plans to put the street on a "road diet," removing excess travel lanes, replacing them with a median, turn bays and a buffered bike lane from the City's *Bicycle Master Plan*. This will slow speeding drivers, make turns safer and reduce swerving, improving safety for everyone. The board's Transportation Committee voted four to two to recommend that the full Community Board support DOT's safety plan, but the full board decided to withhold support. Even though the plan is supported by the owners of Dizzy's restaurant, Councilmember Bill de Blasio, Park Slope Neighbors, T.A. and over 150 Community

ers and bikers were injured or killed on 9th Street and plans to make these necessary safety improvements this summer. In response to requests from Manhattan Community Board 2 and eight elected officials to make Houston Street safe for cycling and to create an east-west connection in the bike network, the DOT developed a creative plan to add bike lanes to Prince, Bleecker and other SoHo and Greenwich Village streets, creating connections from these neighborhoods to the Hudson River Greenway. The plan will also remove 187 parking spaces, which will reduce traffic and is a huge victory for more sensible transportation and more healthy use of public space. The community's request for safety improvements came after three cyclist deaths on Houston Street in 2005 and 2006. This April, in response to an outpouring of residents and cyclists, Board 2's Transportation Committee voted eight to one to support the DOT's plan, and, even though some on the board vehemently opposed it, the full Community Board overwhelmingly voted to support the DOT's proposed "additional" bike lanes on Prince and Bleecker and resolved to continue to urge the City to make Houston Street safe for cycling. □

Get Involved! Get Some Bike Lanes!

The DOT has started to deliver on City Hall's September 2006 promise of 200-miles of new on-street bike lanes and routes by 2009. Public involvement is essential to ensure that the City stripes the highest quality bike lanes and to demonstrate widespread support (and overcome opposition, see story above) for these safety improvements. As the City follows through on its promise and new bike lanes are planned and striped, it is critical that the public keeps requesting bike lanes from the DOT and even more important that residents, workers, business owners and community activists engage their neighbors at the Community Board and block and neighborhood association level to build local support for planned DOT improvements. □

Take Action!
 Would you like to see some of the 200 new miles of bike lanes in your neighborhood? Contact T.A. to find out how to it! E-mail: bike@transalt.org

Status Check on Mayor Bloomberg's Action Steps to Improve City Cycling

On-Street Bike Lanes & Routes	FY2007	Mayor's Target for 2009
DOT's goal	41.2	200
DOT striped miles (April 2007)	28.8	28.8
in the Bronx	9.3	-
in Brooklyn	1.3	-
in Manhattan	7.4	-
in Queens	10.8	-
on Staten Island	0	-
DOT planned miles to reach goal (by June 30)	12.4	171.2
in the Bronx	0	-
in Brooklyn	8.1	-
in Manhattan	4.3	-
in Queens	0	-
on Staten Island	0	-

Note: The City's Fiscal Year (FY) begins on July 1 of the previous calendar year. City Hall's FY2008 goal is 70-miles of on-street bike lanes & routes; the FY2009 goal is 90-miles.