

Making the Grad

THE PURPOSE OF T.A.'S ANNUAL BICYCLING Report Card is to provoke and encourage elected and government agency leaders to make New York City a safe, convenient and inviting environment for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. This responsibility rests mainly with the Mayor and the City DOT but extends to dozens of City and government agencies.

T.A. assigns two grades to eight "Bicycling Basics." The first grade is for government efforts to improve cycling conditions. The second is our assessment of the reality on the street. We give credit for cycling initiatives the agencies have completed in the year of grading, not the years of hard work and planning that came first. We also include a "web survey" grade based on the 884 responses to our January 26 internet poll. For full survey results, see transalt.org/survey2006

PROGRESS: Momentum and Attitude

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B+	C
CYCLING REALITY	B+	B
WEB SURVEY	D+	D

THIS ROUGH BAROMETER measures public attitudes towards and government efforts to promote bicycling.

City Hall's chilly attitude towards improving and promoting cycling thawed during 2006. Early in the year, Mayor Bloomberg added the DOT to Deputy Mayor (and bike commuter) Daniel Doctoroff's portfolio. This realignment, significant staff turnover at DOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs, and a new commitment from the City Health Department to make NYC more bikeable created the right environment for the Bloomberg administration to announce its **Action Steps to improve city cycling**, including: installing 200 miles of bike lanes and routes in the next three years and 40 miles of greenway paths in the next four,

launching a bike safety awareness campaign and family bicycle program, distributing free helmets, collecting better data on bicycling and crashes.

The Action Steps are the biggest commitment to improve bicycling ever to come from City Hall. They were unveiled by four of the Mayor's top advisors (see photo), whose agencies collaborated on *Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City 1996-2006*.

In contrast the NYPD continued its two-year feud with Critical Mass bike rides, even proposing parade permit rules to make group rides and walks illegal and tailoring them to target Critical Mass.

THE OVERALL CYCLING ENVIRONMENT

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C+	C
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C+
WEB SURVEY	C-	C-

HOW SAFE AND INVITING is it to ride and park your bike in NYC?

New York City's density makes bicycling ideal for transportation and recreation. The growing



Parks Commissioner Benepe, Transportation Commissioner Weinshall, Health Commissioner Frieden and NYPD Chief of Transportation Scagnelli (l-r) unveil their Action Steps to improve city cycling.

GRAHAM BECK

number of regular cyclists is making streets safer because the more cyclists there are on the streets, the more motorists will look for bike riders and drive safe around them.

Government can barely keep up with the demand of **more New Yorkers taking to two wheels**. New DOT staff and more interagency collaboration has increased the City's pro-bicycling efforts, but the agencies are still shorthanded. The DOT's emergent **neighborhood bike networks** on the Lower East Side and in Longwood, the Bronx, and existing ones (e.g. Downtown Brooklyn) are an improvement but most neighborhoods lack cycling infrastructure to connect cyclists to neighborhood destinations, bridges, greenways and parks. There is one bike rack for every 35 cyclists, scant indoor bike parking at workplaces stops potential bike commuters, and secure parking at transit is non-existent. Drivers routinely drive and park in bike lanes and **disrespect cyclists'** right to the road. All streets need to be designed and policed to slow drivers, safeguard cyclists and invite New Yorkers for a bike ride.

During 2005's transit strike, protected bike lanes and secure bike parking minted thousands of new cyclists.

Fortunately these improvements ended quickly. By the end of 2006, conditions were only tolerable enough to keep seasoned cyclists riding and to encourage bold New Yorkers to give it a try.

SAFE STREETS

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B	C
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C-
WEB SURVEY	D+	D+

THE THOROUGH MULTI-agency report, *Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries*, shed light on contributing factors in motorist-bicyclist crashes. The report's findings **support what city cyclists know in their guts**: nearly all bicyclist fatalities are caused by crashes with motorists; large vehicles are more deadly than cars; big streets have more crashes than lower traffic roads; most crashes occur at intersections; few crashes occur in bike lanes and few cyclists injured and killed wore

e 2006 T.A.'s 10th Annual Bicycling Report Card

helmets (Ed. note: wear a bike helmet). Cyclist deaths in 2006 fell by half compared to 2005.

The Health Department incorporated bike safety promotion in its restaurant safety program. The DOT started a free helmet distribution program, fitting and giving away over 1,000 helmets. The DOT, Health and Police Departments, along with the Public Advocate, AAA and bike advocates began work on a safety awareness ad campaign aimed at drivers and cyclists.

Despite fatalities and community organizing, the City did not include protected cycling space in its West Houston Street, Manhattan plans.

The State legislature finally doubled the number of life saving red light enforcement cameras in NYC (now up 100).

BICYCLING LANES & STREET DESIGN

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B+	C-
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C+
WEB SURVEY	D+	D+

IN 2006, THE DOT STRIPED 30 miles of bike lanes (compared to 2.5 miles in 2005 and 10 miles in 2004). Most of the new lanes make connections in the bike network. With Speaker Quinn's support, the DOT replaced a lane of car traffic with a buffered bike lane on 8th Avenue from 14th to 23rd Street in Manhattan. (This lane extends to Columbus Circle without a striped buffer.) The DOT striped new bike lanes in the Rockaways, on 20th Avenue connecting to DeMarco Park and

- A..... Top Effort/Top Condition
- B..... Good Effort/Good Condition
- C..... OK Effort/Acceptable Condition
- D..... Poor Effort/Unacceptable Condition
- F..... No Effort/Life Threatening Condition

to calm traffic Commonwealth Avenue and in Queens. In Manhattan, DOT added bike lanes on Grand Street and on 77th, 78th, 79th, 90th and 91st Streets to connect Central and Riverside Parks, and in the Bronx, the agency striped a two-mile connection from Longwood to Bronx Park. Still, citywide, few bike lanes connect to greenways.

The City did not use its study's crash maps or other findings to **prioritize new bike lanes**. The DOT did add new shared-lane bike route markings and signs to its toolbox; a smart improvement for low traffic streets. Still, motorist speed and convenience takes precedence over safety on most streets. The DOT did not reinstate its bike-borne street inspector program, so bike lanes have too many potholes, worn markings, street cuts and mis-placed metal plates.

BRIDGES

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C+	B-
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C+
WEB SURVEY	C+	C

In 2006, East River bridge bicycle traffic continued to rise from 2005's record levels. The four bridges are the backbone of the city's bike network, connecting cyclists between schools, commerce and culture in the two largest business districts in the U.S. But, bike access to most of the East River bridges, Harlem River Bridges and Triborough Bridge, is **dangerous, inconvenient and scary**. Delancey Street remains dangerous though it is the most direct and popular route to the Williamsburg Bridge. The multi-agency bike crash study found clusters of crashes on the Manhattan-side of the Queensboro Bridge. The Port Authority's George Washington Bridge overnight closure to bikers and walkers is irrational and must be reversed.

GREENWAYS

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B+	B+
CYCLING REALITY	B	B-
WEB SURVEY	B	B-

CAR-FREE GREENWAY paths encourage all New Yorkers of all ages to bike. In May, leaders representing 42 civic organizations, city officials and planners met at the inaugural NYC Greenway Summit to build more momentum for more car-free paths. In October, Mayor Bloomberg and Sustainable South Bronx unveiled the South Bronx Greenway plan.

The Parks Department opened a three-mile segment of the Hutchinson River Greenway in the Bronx, 1.5 miles of the Laurelton Greenway in Queens, 2.75-miles of the Beach Greenway on Staten Island and rebuilt two miles of Brooklyn's Shore Parkway Greenway that had collapsed. Parks and City Planning released plans for new greenways in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.

There were also **conflicts and tragedies** on the greenways. Most alarmingly, two cyclists on the Hudson River Greenway were killed by drivers driving on and across the greenway. These tragedies renewed efforts to make the greenway safe.

The City's **fractional closure** of Central and Prospect Parks is a step in the right direction. T.A. educated greenway users about safety. The Parks Enforcement Patrol summonsed cyclists.

PARKING

	2006	2005
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	D	D+
CYCLING REALITY	D-	D-
WEB SURVEY	F	D

THE ADMINISTRATION'S Action Steps to improve city cycling include **no hard**

targets to increase outdoor bike racks or secure indoor bike parking or create secure bike parking at transit. Despite the City's own studies that establish that, due to chronic bike theft, the lack of secure indoor bike parking is the primary obstacle to people who want to bike to work, the Department of City-wide Administrative Services, which manages City-owned buildings, **banned City workers** from bringing their bikes inside. The City Council did not review a bill to require buildings to allow tenants to bring their bikes inside.

The DOT installed 523 free CityRack bike racks (compared to 320 in 2005 and a high of 892 in 2000) and announced plans to **convert car parking** to bike parking and sidewalk. Many Moynihan Station proponents embraced secure bike parking as a necessary piece of the project.

Every bike ride begins and ends with parking. Until New Yorkers are guaranteed secure bike parking, biking will only be a shadow of what it could be.

TRANSIT

	2006	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B+	A-
CYCLING REALITY	B+	B+
WEB SURVEY	D+	C-

In the face of **record-breaking subway ridership**, the MTA earns praise for maintaining its exemplary "bikes aboard" policy that gives cyclists 24-hour access to the subway. Keeping subway access free of restrictions provides a safety net for stranded cyclists and extends how far people can travel by bike. Buses need bike racks, and the MTA should lift the rush hour bike ban on Metro North in the off-peak direction, as it did on the Long Island Railroad.