



Forget about Cars, Streets are for People

WALKING IS SO COMMON-PLACE that many pedestrians take for granted both the joy and the hardships they face on their trips. Some New Yorkers walk because it is the most efficient way for them to travel; for others walking provides a vital connection to transit hubs. Moreover, many New Yorkers choose to walk because walking—taking in the sights, sounds and smells of our city streets—is an essential part of New York life.

Walking is also a vital part of our City's economy—residents, tourists and business travelers all walk to work, to shopping to major cultural destinations. So the question is: why is it not more enjoyable? Why does the City not do more to accommodate New York's walking majority?

Transportation Alternatives has a new campaign that aims to answer these questions and propose long overdue common sense solutions to make walking safer and more enjoyable. Working in partnership with community groups and local businesses T.A.'s NYC Streets Renaissance campaign will transform New York City streets into walkable and enjoyable public spaces.

New Yorkers do not have to settle for the dangerous, dirty, smelly streets that have defined the city for decades. T.A. is ramping up our efforts to raise expectations so that contending with cars dangerously barreling through turns, not having enough time to cross the street, navigating narrow sidewalks made narrower by decrepit news

“It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses.”

—JAN GEHL

boxes and traveling miles before finding a place to sit and relax are not just passively accepted events in the lives of New York's walking majority.

As part of raising expectations we have

invited Jan Gehl, a renowned urban planning visionary, to visit New York this fall and share his experience and knowledge with business and planning leaders here to inspire change to rebalance our streets for people. Thanks in large part to Gehl's efforts, cleaner, quieter streets with less traffic are becoming the norm in London, Melbourne, Seattle and other leading cities.

At the same time T.A. is working to quantify the role that the walking environment plays in the social and economic life of New York City. T.A.'s Neighbors and Traffic Study is examining the relationship between high volumes of traffic and social interactions between neighbors on streets in Astoria, Queens; Brooklyn Heights, Brooklyn, Chinatown, Manhattan and Highbridge, The Bronx (see page 16 for more details). T.A.'s Stroller Report Card quantifies the unique problems of navigating New York's walking environment with young children (see page 16 for more details). And T.A.'s New York City Shopping Study will quantify the economic impact of driving and parking on our city's parking districts.

These studies will add to existing data we have compiled through our Safe Routes

Reclaiming the Streets



Clockwise: 5th Avenue, Fulton Street, Canal Street and 32nd Street all in Manhattan. Crowding on city sidewalks is bad for business and bad for the social life of New Yorkers. Cities worldwide are reprioritizing street space for walking and bicycling. T.A.'s new NYC Streets Renaissance campaign is helping NYC follow suit.

for Seniors and Safe Routes to Schools campaigns. Safe Routes for Seniors has found that many senior citizens in Northern Manhattan would walk more if improvements were made to dangerous streets. T.A.'s Safe Routes to Schools program in the Bronx found that young children would walk or bike to school more often if similar improvements were made.

Streets are for all the people who need to use them to get to school, work, shopping and social destinations everyday. After all, all street users pay to create, maintain and to use them. Unfortunately, many cyclists and pedestrians are not getting their money's worth. T.A.'s NYC Streets Renaissance campaign seeks to change New Yorkers' one-dimensional perception of streets to reflect their many uses: walking, bicycling or simply enjoying a beautiful day. We can make our city easier to navigate and make getting from point A to point B a more enjoyable part of living in New York.

Introducing Jan Gehl

Jan Gehl is a hero to Londoners. A world renowned architect and urban designer, Gehl's blueprint for remaking London's

streets, "Towards A Fine City for People," has placed the aim of walkable and shopable public spaces at the top of London's urban agenda.

Transportation Alternatives is bringing Jan Gehl to New York City to meet with the city's movers and shakers and share his vision for pedestrian and cyclist friendly streets. New Yorkers are a proud and independent breed; they do not always take kindly to outsiders telling them how to do things. Yet sometimes it is hard to maintain the appropriate perspective or to dream what could be possible while being so immersed in the day-to-day reality of New York City. Gehl offers an opportunity for New York's leaders to take a fresh look at our streets.

Gehl's new perspective on old problems has inspired many and instilled confidence in city leaders from London, England to Capetown, South Africa to stand up for pedestrian initiatives. Gehl has achieved great success through simple, commonsense street improvements that attract and retain more businesses and shoppers, by making it a safer and more enjoyable experience to walk and ride bikes.

His outsider insights might be just what New York needs to see our city streets as cyclist and pedestrian friendly spaces.

Contested Streets: The Movie

Gehl's will also be here to introduce a sneak preview of the film *Contested Streets: Breaking New York City Gridlock*, a T.A. produced documentary that explores the rich diversity of New York City street life before the introduction of automobiles and shows how New York can follow the example of other modern cities that have reclaimed their streets as vibrant public spaces. It features New York historians Ken Jackson and Mike Wallace, along with business leaders such as Tim Tompkins, Executive Director of the Time Square Alliance; Patricia Brown, Executive Director, Central London Partnership and Kathryn Wylde from the Partnership for New York City.

This new documentary provides additional information on how we can balance our streets for people, as is being done in other metropolises throughout the world. For upcoming screening dates and information about how to get a copy of this groundbreaking documentary please email streets@transalt.org. □