

Making the Grad

THE PURPOSE OF T.A.'S BICYCLING REPORT Card is to provoke and encourage our politicians and government agencies to make NYC safer and more convenient for current cyclists and more inviting for future ones. Principally, this responsibility rests with the Mayor and the City Department of Transportation but extends to many other 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. This is the third year we include a public opinion grade based on twelve hundred responses to our January 20th internet poll. For full survey results, see transalt.org/survey2005.



NOAH BUDNICK

More cyclists on the streets means fewer crashes.

PROGRESS: Momentum and Attitude

	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C	B
CYCLING REALITY	B	B-
WEB SURVEY	D	C-

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

There was safety in numbers in 2005, which had the second highest number of daily bike riders and the second lowest number of bicyclist crashes in the past decade-and-a-half. More cyclists made motorists more aware of bikers.

During December's transit strike, the City showed what biking could be: protected bike lanes and secure bike parking encouraged biking at five times the normal rate. Before and after the transit strike, little progress was made to make streets safe, secure bike parking abundant

- 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

and cycling an everyday option for New Yorkers. Bike Month NYC was the biggest ever, and the NYC Department of City Planning hosted the first-ever "State of Cycling" forum to solicit public comments on biking. In October, Bronx Borough President Carrión, the DOT and NYPD returned **Car-Free Sundays to the Grand Concourse**.

The deaths of twenty-one cyclists highlighted the demand for safer streets. The high number of deaths along with the NYPD's two month bike ticket blitz and clipping of a dozen parked bikes stoked an adversarial relationship between bicyclists, would-be bicyclists and City agencies. The NYPD also continued to crack-down on Critical Mass.

THE OVERALL CYCLING ENVIRONMENT

	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C	B
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C+
WEB SURVEY	C-	C-

HOW SAFE AND INVITING is it to ride and park your bike in New York City?

In a few neighborhoods, safe streets, greenways and bridge paths connect to create local bike networks that encourage New Yorkers to ride. Yet, the vast majority of streets are not designed or policed to slow drivers and safeguard cyclists and do not invite adults, let alone children, to go out their front door for a bike ride. New Yorkers love biking on **car-free greenways**, but few have safe access to them or to the East River bridge bike paths. Drivers routinely cut off cyclists, drive and park in bike lanes and disrespect cyclists' right to the road.

The lack of secure bike parking, the number one reason why New Yorkers do not bike to work, went unsolved, and the City crippled outdoor bike parking by deciding that bikes not parked at bike racks are abandoned and can be seized without notice at its discretion.

At the end of 2005, conditions in most neighborhoods were only tolerable enough to keep seasoned cyclists riding and to encourage bold New Yorkers to try biking around the city.

SAFE STREETS

	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C-	C+
CYCLING REALITY	C-	C-
WEB SURVEY	D+	D+

MOTORISTS' HABITUAL speeding, cutting off cyclists and "dooring" make streets dangerous for cyclists. While 2005 had the second lowest number of bicyclist crashes over the past fifteen years, it was the third most deadly year for cyclists during that time. In the fall, the DOT announced new bike safety initiatives, including a bicyclist crash study and bike safety public awareness campaign. **The Staten Island City Council delegation took action to stop dangerous driving** by funding the "Speeding. There's no excuse" ad campaign. T.A., elected officials and the NYPD educated businesses about delivery cyclist safety, traffic laws and not riding on the sidewalk. NYC2012's taxicab stickers reminded passengers to "Exit curbside and check for cyclists." The NYPD's TrafficStat informed precincts'

e 2005 T.A.'s 9th Annual Bicycling Report Card

traffic enforcement, but the police did not crackdown on **dangerous, aggressive and speeding drivers** citywide. Traffic on direct routes, like Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, Hylan Boulevard in Staten Island and Houston Street and other Manhattan avenues is still too dangerous for most bicyclists.

BICYCLING LANES & STREET DESIGN		
	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	C-	B+
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C+
WEB SURVEY	D+	C

IN 2005, THE DOT STRIPED 2.5-miles of bike lanes and paths (compared to 10-miles in 2004 and 27-miles in 2003). The DOT's Brooklyn office installed the **Tillary Street greenway** to connect the Clinton Street bike lane to the Brooklyn Bridge. This on-street greenway marks the first time a design from the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway was used since Mayor Bloomberg opened it in 2003. The City coned-off bike lanes and cleared adjacent parking during the transit strike. This stopped motorists from driving and doubling parking in bike lanes and should be the design template for bike lanes citywide.

Citywide, practically no bridge and greenway paths connect to each other or to other parts of the bike network. On most streets, motorist speed and convenience takes precedence over cyclist safety. Bike lanes are potholed and have worn markings, unfilled street cuts and many metal plates. The DOT did not release plans for its two-year old **Safe Routes to School** program, which will improve safety for students and everyone traveling near the project's 135 schools.

ED. NOTE: This category is expanded from "bicycling

lanes" to include "street design" because physical changes like speed humps and curb extensions also slow drivers and improve bicyclists' safety.

BRIDGES		
	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B-	C
CYCLING REALITY	C+	C
WEB SURVEY	C	C

EAST RIVER BRIDGE BICYCLE traffic hit a historic 4,800 daytime crossings in 2005. The bridges are the backbone of the city's bike network, connecting cyclists in the two most populous boroughs to schools, jobs, shopping and culture in the two largest business districts in the U.S. But, bike access to all but two sides of the East River bridges, and all of the Harlem River Bridges and Triborough Bridge, is dangerous, inconvenient and scary. City Planning did not release studies to improve safety. The DOT removed the dangerous bumps on the **Williamsburg Bridge** biking and walking path, immensely improving safety on this heavily cycled East River crossing. The DOT ably cleared debris from the East River bridge paths, but broken lights need attention. The Port Authority's George Washington Bridge overnight closure to bikers and walkers is irrational and must be reversed.

GREENWAYS		
	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	B+	B+
CYCLING REALITY	B-	B-
WEB SURVEY	B-	B

CAR-FREE GREENWAY PATHS are popular with cyclists of all ages and encourage more New Yorkers to bike. New York City's Congressio-

nal Representatives secured \$40 million for new greenways. The Parks and City Planning Departments and State DOT planned greenways in every borough. The NYC Landmarks Commission approved Parks' plan to build the 83rd to 91st Street link in the Hudson River Greenway. The State legislature did not approve the UN's expansion plans, which include a key piece of the East River Greenway.

The Gates brought two calm, car-free weeks to Central Park, and the DOT and Parks Department quietly eliminated November to January's **"Holiday" car-full hours in Prospect Park**. T.A., the Parks Departments, the Hudson River Park Trust and Friends of Riverside Park educated Hudson River Greenway riders about safety. The greenway in **Fort Washington Park** was invaded by cars, and bicyclist-pedestrian conflicts, cars driving on and across greenways and bike traffic jams were frequent on other popular greenway paths. The Parks Department is fixing the collapsing Shore Parkway Greenway in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, but Parks and DOT did nothing near Spring Creek, Brooklyn where greenway users are forced along the highway shoulder.

PARKING		
	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	D	C
CYCLING REALITY	D-	D-
WEB SURVEY	D	D

PARKING IS A REQUIREMENT for all bike trips, and on-street parking is essential for doing business by bike. New Yorkers park at sign- and lampposts and parking meters out of necessity—there is only one bike rack for every thirty cyclists. Yet, the NYPD **seized bikes not parked at racks**, and the

Department of Sanitation ticketed parked delivery bikes. City Council legislation was introduced to stop police seizures, and the 9th Precinct started an **abandoned bike tagging program**. The DOT's CityRacks program installed 395 free bike racks (compared to 451 in 2004 and 218 in 2003).

New York City's tenacious bike thieves make indoor bike parking a necessity. A **City Council bill** would allow tenants to bring their bicycles inside and was reviewed by two-dozen building developers and managers and garnered the support of over half the City Council, but the Housing and Buildings Committee did not review it.

Little progress was made on secure parking at Penn and Moynihan Stations or at transit hubs in Lower Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn. Until New Yorkers are guaranteed indoor bike parking at home and work, biking will only be a shadow of what it could be here.

TRANSIT		
	2005	2004
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS	A-	A-
CYCLING REALITY	B+	A-
WEB SURVEY	C-	C-

NYC IS THE ONLY CITY IN the world where bike riders have 24-hour access to the subway system. This helps cyclists escape foul weather and mechanical failures, and it extends how far people can travel by bike. The MTA changed many subway rules in 2005, but it did not restrict bike access. Token booth closures are an inconvenience, but our online question must have misled readers, because, commuter rail aside, the MTA's "common sense" bicycle policy on the subway is the best transit deal cyclists have anywhere. □