

THE NEW YORK

City Cyclist

PUBLISHED BY TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

SPECIAL ISSUE JAN '88

THE BAN IS BACK!

MAYOR KOCH has filed legal papers allowing him to ban weekday bicycle riding on 5th, Madison and Park Avenues between 31st and 59th Streets. The ban could start as early as January 30.

Bike riders of all stripes -- commuters, messengers, recreational -- defeated the ban once, last summer. We demonstrated, wrote letters, took our case to the media, rode more safely and went to court. We're going to do it all again, and bury the ban for good.

Last summer's legal victory arose from the City's failure to publish the ban before promulgating it. Our case now rests on state and federal laws against pollution and discrimination, and guaranteeing equal protection. We also have to isolate Koch politically and convince him to change his mind. This means persuading public officials, especially City Council members, that banning bikes is bad for NYC.

If you ride a bicycle; if you don't ride but would if conditions were better; if you don't want autos choking our streets and fumes polluting our air; if you feel that a city that forces bicycle-riding off its streets is a city that's losing its life -- join us to do something about it.

WRITE CITY HALL

Send us a letter opposing the ban and demanding a public hearing. We'll send copies of your letter to the Mayor, the Dept. of Transportation, your Borough

President and City Council member. A 1-paragraph letter today is better than a 3-page letter tomorrow. Get your friends to write. Send your letter to Transportation Alternatives, PO Box 2087, NYC 10009. Or, if you prefer, write directly to Mayor Koch, City Hall, NYC 10007. Copies to your City Council member are probably more important.

CELEBRATE CYCLING

Join the parades down 5th Ave. every Saturday protesting the ban. All human-powered travelers welcome -- bicyclists, pedestrians, chair-riders, etc. Meet at Central Park 72nd St. boathouse at noon; downtown contingent gathers at 111 East 12 St. between 10 and 11 a.m. See listings on back page for Bike City and Anything Goes to plan more events, make signs and leaflets, etc.

JOIN T.A.

This message for bicycling and against the bike ban is published by Transportation Alternatives, NYC's largest bicycle advocacy organization. We need your support. \$15 gets you membership for all of 1988, including 6 regular issues of City Cyclist and discounts at many bike stores. Bigger contributions help pay for more messages like this and our lawsuit against the ban. Send your name, address and money to T.A., PO Box 2087, NYC 10009. See back page for dates of our next general meetings.

TEN REASONS TO ST

1. The ban is discriminatory.

No other means of transportation is barred from Manhattan streets, no matter how dangerous, polluting or useless. Not cars, trucks, taxicabs, limousines, motorcycles -- not even mobile billboards. Threatening behavior by these vehicles is virtually unregulated, creating a climate of endangerment to pedestrians and bike riders alike. Yet bicycles -- nonpolluting, compact, quiet, efficient and available to anyone -- are to be barred from the heart of midtown.

2. Cyclists are riding more safely (motorists are not).

Bikes are hitting fewer pedestrians, but motor vehicles are hitting -- and killing -- many more pedestrians and bike riders. Police statistics for accidents and fatalities in all of NYC are shown in the adjoining table (figures for midtown Manhattan alone weren't available).

Bike-pedestrian accidents are down 20% in 1987. But vehicle-bike accidents are up almost 50%, and fatalities have doubled. From January to October 1987, motor vehicles killed 263 pedestrians and 14 bike riders. During the same period, 2 pedestrians died in collisions with bicycles.

Although "near misses" between pedestrians and bike riders aren't recorded, neither are close calls involving motor vehicles. Nor do the figures tell which party was technically at fault.

The cause of the drop in bike-pedestrian accidents is almost certainly greater respect for each other's right-of-way. And this year's drop follows a 10% drop in bike-pedestrian accidents in 1986 from 1985. In contrast, the alarming jump in vehicle-bicycle accidents and fatalities could be attributable to motorists picking up on City Hall's hostility to bikes.

Who's Really Getting Hurt?

NYC TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS
City-wide, First 10 Months of Years

	1986	1987	% Change
Bike-Ped. Accidents	584	467	down 20%
Bike-Ped. Fatalities	2	2	no change
Vehicle-Ped. Accidents	11,800	12,012	up 2%
Vehicle-Ped. Fatalities	224	263	up 17%
Vehicle-Bike Accidents	2,629	3,921	up 49%
Vehicle-Bike Fatalities	7	14	up 100%

Figures compiled by Transportation Alternatives from NYPD records. 1986 bike-ped. fatalities are for full 12 months.

3. There are better ways to improve safety.

The most immediate way to reduce bicyclist-pedestrian conflict is directed police enforcement. To date, the police have mostly ticketed non-dangerous bicycle infractions, such as proceeding carefully through red lights after yielding (which many riders feel is necessary to keep a safe distance from motor traffic). Bicyclist groups have called repeatedly for ticketing cyclists who crash red lights at high speed, ride the wrong way, or fail to yield to pedestrians. We have also asked that police discourage careless jaywalking and ticket motorists who run bike riders off the road.

Safety would also be improved by: experimenting with police on bikes (as in Seattle, Washington); publicizing the Universal Safety Code developed by cyclists and endorsed by Manhattan Borough Pres. Dinkins' pedestrian study panel; curbing the traffic overload that intensifies competition between bike riders and pedestrians for street space; and providing bike-priority streets. All these safety ideas have been advanced by bicyclist groups and ignored by City Hall.



4. The ban will further push cyclists to the edge.

The Koch Administration abandoned bicycle riders years ago. It rarely helps bicycling -- even in simple things like installing bike racks and keeping key bridges open to bike riders. Constructive initiatives from bicyclists on safety, education and engineering lie fallow. The ban confirms our worst fears -- that nothing is gained by responsible riding and advocacy when the Mayor has decided against bicycling. What avenues and districts will be banned next?

5. Danger to pedestrians & bike riders will increase.

The ban will force cyclists to ride more miles and more hours. Some will ride faster and wrong-way to make up lost time. Bike traffic will increase on other avenues, such as 6th and Lexington, where pedestrians are less accustomed to bicycle riders.

Cyclists are already defenseless from cars, cabs and trucks. 14 of us died in the first 10 months of 1987 in collisions with

OP THE BIKE BAN

motor vehicles -- double the 7 killed in all of 1986 (see table). Accidents between bikes and vehicles increased an astounding 49% over the same period, from 2,629 in 1986 to 3,921 in 1987. Banning bikes from the city's center will further mark us as fair game to aggressive drivers frustrated by gridlock.

6. The ban was conceived through a closed political process.

Mayor Koch isn't listening. Anti-ban letters to City Hall out-numbered pro-ban letters 15-to-1 last summer. Yet the Mayor refuses to meet with bicyclist representatives to hear our point of view. No effort is made to understand the situation; neither the Mayor nor his Department of Transportation knew about the drop in bike-pedestrian accidents (the data was buried piecemeal in police records). Apparently, Koch is determined to fulfill his pledge from September, after we overturned the first ban in court, that "bicyclists will be sorry and their victory short-lived."

7. The ban will further foul the air and the streets.

New York air, officially polluted by EPA standards, will get even filthier. Some bike messengers switched to mopeds in the face of the first ban; many more mopeds can be expected now. Moped emissions are unregulated, despite their inherently polluting 2-stroke engine cycle. According to DoT, one moped pollutes as much as 10 cars. Mopeds are noisy as well, and messengers on mopeds may be more hazardous to pedestrians. Some bike commuters will switch to cars and taxis, adding to traffic, fumes and crowding.

8. Unemployment, inefficiency and poverty will deepen.

Biking is one of NYC's best bargains. Bikes move vital papers quickly through the legal, financial and publishing communities. The messenger trade provides a living wage and entry into the work force for thousands of motivated younger workers, many of them minorities. Bicycling is an affordable commute for thousands of office workers, cultural workers, and craft workers. The ban will reverse bicycling's contributions to the City's economy by making commuting and messengering by bike less viable.

9. The ban is an ecological step backwards.

For all its imperfections, bicycling remains one of NYC's few robust ecological expressions. Bicycles are silent, use no

fuel and produce no fumes. In effect they run on solar energy, captured via photosynthesis and human metabolism.

Bicycling is human-scale. It allows people the range afforded by autos and the sense of place possible from walking. Bikeriders are a living, breathing alternative to the city's domination by motor vehicles. Banning bikes, while leaving uncontrolled the disruptive accoutrements of auto culture -- stretch limo's, smoke-belching buses, car alarms, the overall racetrack mentality -- is ecologically insane. The damage will spread as other cities follow our lead.

10. The ban is destructive to New York's spirit.

Biking is liberating. At its best, it's magical. How else to describe the feeling from staying with traffic, the breeze over one's skin, traversing the city under one's own power. This is no excuse for running into or threatening pedestrians. But it is cause for the City to encourage bicyclists instead of trying to crush our spirit.

If the ban wins, more than bikers lose. A city that forces bicycle-riding off its streets is a city that's losing its life.

Artwork by
James Holcolm
for Bike
City



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES is a non-profit association of New Yorkers advancing bicycles as NYC transportation.

CITY CYCLIST is mailed to T.A. members 6 times a year, plus special issues.

JOIN UP!

With Bikers Fighting The Ban

Transportation Alternatives

PO Box 2087, NYC 10009 (212) 866-7489.
We publish City Cyclist 6 times a year, plus special issues like this one. We meet on the first Thursday of the month, 6 p.m., at 270 Lafayette St (@ Prince St) Room 902. Next meetings: January 7, February 4.

We're making progress in the uphill fight to improve the climate for bicycle riding in New York City. In recent months we have:

- * Helped overturn the first midtown bike ban through legal action and support of protest demonstrations and safer riding.

- * Won an endorsement of our safety education and road-sharing efforts, from Manhattan Bor. President Dinkins' pedestrian council.

- * Campaigned for even-handed, effective enforcement of traffic laws to protect and not just punish bicycle riders.

- * Gotten better access to the Brooklyn Bridge and -- hopefully soon -- George Washington Bridge bike paths.

- * Persuaded the NYC Department of Transportation to expand its staff working for better biking conditions.

- * Begun efforts to increase bike parking.

- * Kept NYC cyclists informed on bike security, routes, rides, law and activities.

- * Built a working coalition encompassing the full spectrum of NYC cyclists.

- * Improved the image of cycling to make it easier for political officials and the media to back our cause.

- * Brought the cyclist's perspective into struggles over clean air, open space, traffic, and control of NYC streets.

A year's membership is \$15. Larger contributions welcome (and tax-deductible).

Bicycle Transportation Action

308 E 79 St, NYC 10021 (212) 288-3103
governmental, civic, and business action to encourage safe and effective bicycle use; urges constituent contact with legislators, executives, political candidates.

Independent Couriers Association

PO Box 3137, NYC 10027 (212) 713-5073
organized by and for bike messengers; active for messenger rights, against licensing.

Anything Goes

111 E 12 St, NYC 10003 (212) 505-8276
builds, displays, sells and rents human-powered utility vehicles (see photos in Dec/Jan City Cyclist); open afternoons and evenings; special bike gatherings with Bike City, Fridays starting 6 p.m.

Bike City

49 E Houston St, NYC 10012 (212) 431-0600
main organizer of parades down 5th Ave. every Saturday celebrating cycling and protesting the ban; all human-powered travelers welcome -- cyclists, pedestrians, chair-riders, etc. meet Central Park 72nd St. boathouse 12 noon; downtown riders assemble at Anything Goes (see above), 10-11 a.m. Group meets Tuesdays 6 pm at 49 East Houston and Fridays 6 pm at Anything Goes to plan more events, make signs and leaflets.

Transportation Alternatives
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