

THE NEW YORK

# City Cyclist

READER SURVEY  
ENCLOSED

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# SAVE YOUR BIKE

by Frank Gresham

The street seems always to have the upper hand on us. New bike locks come and go, but bicycle theft remains a constant in New York City.

Since volunteering to help Transportation Alternatives' theft prevention committee this past summer, I've learned that many city cyclists aren't savvy to the ways of NYC bike thieves. Cops, too, seem out of touch with the true scope of bicycle theft in the city. (See "Theft Plague Continues" in the Sept-Oct *City Cyclist*). And more than a few bike shops either don't know or aren't mentioning to customers that the high-tech lock their customer has just selected to secure a new \$400 city-bike can be removed in 30 seconds by a thief armed with a pipe or a length of wood. Often, our baffled victims return to the same bike shops as before, and the theft cycle begins all over again.

Step one in reclaiming our streets and our bicycles from bike thieves is to arm ourselves with awareness of current theft techniques and prevention principles. As obvious as some of these concepts may seem, they demand constant review. Based on input from our collective experiences, these maxims are the essential rules, the "10 Commandments," of bike theft prevention for New York City cyclists.

(more on page 12)



PHOTO BY JIN-ME YOON

# SAVE OUR AIR

by Carl Hultberg

NYC is still feeling the positive effects of *Clean Air Now or Never* -- the first clean air rally here in over 10 years.

(more on page 4)

# NYC DoT No-Show On Bikes

by Charles Komanoff

When over 200 bicycle planners and activists met in Tucson October 9-12 for the 5th biennial "PRO-BIKE" Conference, there was one glaring absence -- the NYC Dept of Transportation. Cities from around the U.S. and Canada sent their bicycle administrators, and private groups including T.A. sent their staff, but NYC Bicycle Co-ordinator John Benfatti stayed home.

PRO-BIKE is the one occasion, every two years, at which bicycle professionals and advocates gather from around the country to talk on what works for bicycling. At Tucson, representatives from Seattle, Palo Alto, and Washington DC explained how they've made bicycling an integral part of their transportation systems. Attendees traded the latest info on the hardware and politics of bike parking, building access, safety, education, enforcement and transit connections.

So where was NYC? The charitable answer is that Bicycle Co-ordinator Benfatti, as ardent an advocate of bicycling as there is in this town, was kept here by other priorities, notably last-minute preparations for opening a major stretch of the Brooklyn-Queens Greenway (see the Sept-Oct *City Cyclist*). But a more realistic view is that John's superiors don't have their priorities straight. In T.A.'s view, DoT's ignoring the Tucson conference wasn't merely a missed opportunity to learn about bicycle progress elsewhere; it was symptomatic of NYC Government's failure to take bicycle transportation seriously.

The hard truth is that DoT Commissioner Ross Sandler, a one-time effective environmental lawyer, has little to show for his three years at the helm of DoT. He has cleaned up the scandal-plagued agency, but nothing more. Cyclists can't point to a single thing DoT has delivered to make bicycling in NYC easier or safer.

Having a former environmentalist running DoT isn't helping the environment. Once again, it's up to us.



DoT Commissioner Ross Sandler standing still on bikes.

HOTO BY STEPHANIE BERGER / NYCDOT

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## TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Transportation Alternatives is a non-profit association of New Yorkers dedicated to advancing bicycles as NYC transportation.

### CITY CYCLIST

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## A BUDGET FOR BIKES

by Roger Herz

*Ed. Note: Believing the grassroots often have a better grip on fiscal priorities than City Hall, over a hundred NYC civic and community groups have been creating an "Alter-budget Agenda," under the aegis of the City Project. The Alterbudget includes specific recommendations on revenues and expenditures to improve delivery of city services and enhance the quality of life in NYC.*

*Roger Herz, director of Bicycle Transportation Action (BTA) and a long-time NYC bicycle activist, submitted the following statement for this year's Alterbudget.*

Bicycles are a legitimate and efficient mode of transportation, with great potential for improving mobility and air quality and for strengthening the city economy. Bicycles are energy-efficient and help offset the greenhouse effect.

Bicycle transportation use has tripled in the last 12 years -- to 70,000 a day in NYC and 2.4 million in the nation. While cities such as Seattle, Washington DC, San Diego, and Madison have qualified and dedicated professional staff with administration support to encourage safe and effective bicycle use, NYC has sought to discourage cycling, most notably in the absurd failed attempt to illegally ban bicycles on midtown Manhattan avenues, at a projected annual cost of \$950,000. In contrast, the total cost of the 5 recommendations below is \$162,000. ▶



# Nov. 8 Highway Boondoggle: Vote NO!

by Charlie McCorkell

The 3 billion dollar "Rebuild New York" state highway bond issue (Proposition 1) will appear on the November ballot, alongside the contest between Michael Dukakis and George Bush. At this time most New Yorkers seem uninformed regarding four key questions:

- What will be funded through Proposition 1?
- How much will the bond issue cost?
- Why was the bond issue proposed?
- What do critics of Proposition 1 say?

The bond issue will provide three billion dollars in capital improvements of our road infrastructure. In NYC, \$200 million is earmarked for bridge repair, but almost \$500 million will go to repair the Gowanus and Van Wyck Expressways and other road projects. Major Long Island

commuter roads including the L.I.E. will be widened and "improved" for almost \$700 million. New York City and Long Island will get 46% of the overall money.

The \$3 billion will be raised through the sale of tax-free state bonds. Counting amortization and lost tax dollars, this works out to about \$120 per taxpayer per year for 10 years.

This year's bond issue is being packaged as a response to the Williamsburg bridge closing last spring and the collapse of the Schoharie Creek Bridge on the NY Thruway last year. But despite huge infusions of funds from past bond issues, the transportation system has been deteriorating for years,

The rallying cry of Proposition 1 opponents is DON'T BE FOOLED. While \$200 million is set aside to repair New York City's bridges, it would take almost twice that to repair the Williamsburg Bridge alone. Bridge repairs will be dwarfed by highway construction. And for every dollar NYC residents pay to retire the bonds, the City will receive less than 50 cents in funding.

We need to plan for transportation and air quality before we start rebuilding our mistakes. Bigger, smoother highways in Long Island will pour more cars onto the streets of Manhattan, crowding out bicyclists and pedestrians alike. Proposition 1 will create monuments for politicians to hang their names on; it's more important that we stop and look where we are and where we want to be.

*Past T.A. president Charlie McCorkell is a bike store owner and former transportation engineer.*

## T.A. MEETINGS

Transportation Alternatives members meet on the first Thursday of every month, at 270 Lafayette St. (corner Prince St.), Room 400. Meetings start 6 p.m. and end around 8. *Next meetings:* Nov. 3, Dec. 1. Catch up on T.A.'s activities, contribute your ideas, and meet like-minded, friendly cyclists. See you there!

## EARN \$\$\$ - HELP T.A.

T.A. is looking for an Advertising Manager to build up and maintain *City Cyclist* advertising. Payment by commission. Call T.A. to inquire (212-334-9343).

### Recommendations

**1. Office of Bicycle Programs** An office of Bicycle Programs should be established in the Department of Transportation (DoT), directed by a qualified and dedicated Bicycle Administrator, with at least one qualified assistant. (Seattle and Washington DC, with one-tenth NYC's population, each have two professional staff, as did NYC in the early 1980s.) Both must understand government procedures and be able to work vigorously with other DoT bureaus, other city, state, and federal agencies, business, civic, and community groups.

The Administrator should produce a monthly status report on project review (e.g., bridge and street reconstruction), data (bicycles are seldom included in traffic counts; accident and enforcement data analysis is minimal), secure parking and building access, replacement of hazardous parallel-bar sewer grates (announced by the Mayor March 21, 1985, but little implemented); and bicycle safety education. **Cost: Administrator \$40K, assistant \$25K, Total -- \$65K.**

**2. Bicycle Traffic Law Enforcement** The Police Department should focus on dangerous behavior rather than trivial offenses, publish monthly enforcement data by precinct (NYPD has conceded that such data goes into the computer monthly but never comes out); and work with the Administration Adjudication Unit to produce a periodic report on summonses disposition. The objective must be not to give out pieces of paper, but to provide the perception to a potential offender of a probable hassle and penalty.

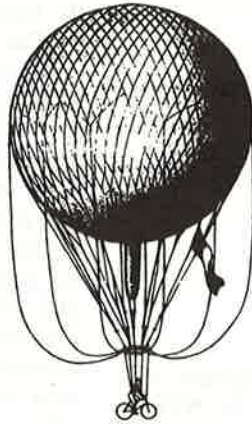
A pilot project should be tried, with 5 officers assigned to street patrol on bicycles, to test the utility of a program successful in other cities. **Cost: \$400/bicycle x 5 = \$2K.**

**3. Theft Prevention** The epidemic of bicycle theft is a major disincentive to bicycle transportation use. While about 8,000 thefts are reported annually, the actual figure is probably about 50,000; some NYPD staff discourage reporting thefts as of little value, and recovery rate is minimal. At an average value of \$300, the total loss is \$15 million a year; the economic loss is greater. At least one officer should be assigned to counter bicycle theft, including sting and surveillance. **Cost: \$45K.**

**4. Bicycle Safety Education** Responsible street behavior must be taught in the schools. Bicycles are vehicles, not toys. Since 1973, Section 806 of the NYS Education Law has required teaching bicycle safety education. But few NYC students get such instructions, although good curricula are available. **Cost: Zero.**

**5. Secure Parking** The Department of General Services should install 1,000 secure bicycle parking spaces at major government, commercial, institutional, transit, and rail locations. Property-owners should be encouraged, not discouraged, from providing bicycle parking. The old useless and unused rack in front of City Hall should be replaced. **Cost: \$50K.**





PHOTOS BY SUSAN EDELSTEIN, JASON ESKENAZI, MALLORY HATTIE, JIN-ME YOON



Michael Oppenheimer  
Environmental Defense Fund

# SAVE OUR AIR

(continued from page 1)

On a chilly Wednesday afternoon (Oct. 12), this T.A.-sponsored event brought hundreds of New Yorkers together at City Hall Park to listen to music and hear three of the city's (and the nation's) most lucid environmentalists speak out for clean air (see excerpts, pp 4-5).

More than just a good-time event, the *Clean Air Now or Never* rally marked the end of public indifference to air pollution in NYC. The first rally of its kind here to unite bicyclists, pedestrians, recyclers, incinerator foes and city gardeners, *Clean Air Now or Never* spoke to the hearts of every New Yorker it touched.

Memorable moments: the arrival of the cycling contingent at City Hall, ranging from unicycles to 3-wheel utility vehicles; the colorful signs held aloft by the marchers and draped around the bicycle riders ("Human Power, not MPH" and dozens more -- see p. 4); the spontaneous applause given to demonstrators carrying "car-buster" posters in the subway; and perhaps the most awesome sight of the day: bike messengers (including Steve Athineos, leader of last year's bike-ban-beating messenger rides) cheering clean-air champion Marcy Benstock's call to invest highway funds in mass transit!

What next? Plans are being made for a bigger spring event, Earth Day '89, which will unite T.A.'s now well-proven organizing skills with those of other local eco-organizers. Join us for the November 15 (Tuesday) planning meeting, 270 Lafayette St., Room 400, 6:30 sharp. Don't hold your breath for clean air! ■

We haven't been tough enough. We haven't brought the fight directly to the politician's door in a way they can understand. We haven't made environment a *litmus test* issue.

The public is ready for action. The summer of 1988 will go down as the time when people woke up. When they heard that the ozone layer was disappearing; when they heard the world was heating out of control; when they looked to the future and saw their worst nightmare come true; when they thought twice about having children, not because of the threat of nuclear war but because we're wrecking the atmosphere.

On Earth Day 1970, people said earth might die -- not with a bang but with a whimper, as humans slowly but inexorably strangled the planet. Today, you can hear the earth whimper -- and it sounds like a death rattle. Twenty years from now, our children will ask "How could you let this happen?" After this summer, no one can say "I couldn't see it coming."

It's getting late -- but there is still time. The signs of awakening are everywhere. People are wondering out loud. But is the Mayor listening? Is the Governor listening? Do the Presidential candidates hear us? Not yet, they don't. But they will if you scream loud enough and often enough. If you live the idea -- and *talk* about it -- and *vote* for it.

Why not start out local -- start out small -- like with an auto ban in midtown Manhattan?

Our so-called leaders won't save the earth just because it's the right thing to do. You have to force them to do it.

This is not a time to *compromise*; this is a time to *organize*. Let's get going. NOW! ■





# Oct. 12 Rally: Clean Air Now!

**Marcy Benstock**  
Director, Clean Air Campaign

It's wonderful to see all of you here today, because the only way we'll ever get healthy air in New York City is if citizens become active and show public officials how much they care.

Most of the smog and carbon monoxide that blankets the City comes from automobiles. The only way to reduce those poisons is to cut way down on automobile traffic. People now driving around the city need to be persuaded to get out of their cars and into less polluting transportation -- mass transit and rail, bicycles, ferryboats, and walking.

Transportation planners know how to do that: Give people good alternatives to cars for every link in their trips. Make it fast and convenient and safe and reliable and cheap for people to ride a bike to a subway and walk from the subway to work.

But for transportation planners to do that, they need the right direction from the Governor and the Mayor. And for the last 15 years, our Governors and Mayors have been sending the transportation system in exactly the wrong direction.

They've spent our money to widen highways and build new ones while mass transit crumbled. They narrowed sidewalks and took bike lanes away. They subsidized development far from mass transit, so that people would have to drive.

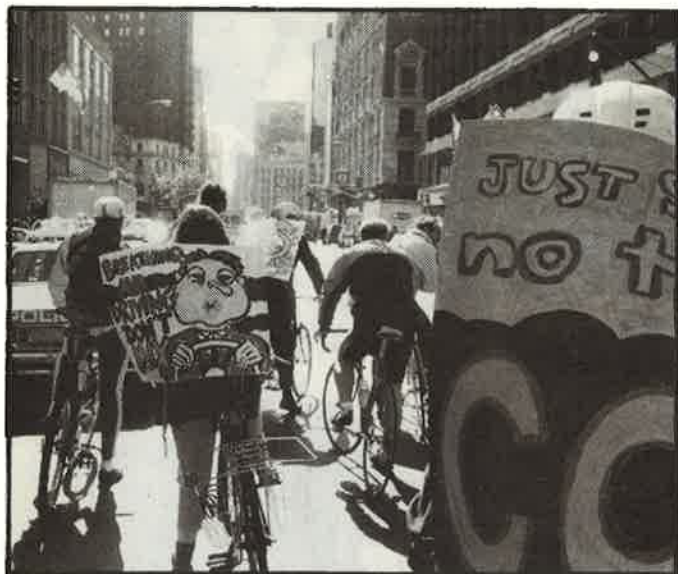
The result has been exactly what you'd expect -- more and more people squeezing their cars into Manhattan and other congested areas that are already choking on traffic and smog.

Things don't have to be that way. NYC has the most extensive subway system in the world, and it could be fantastic if public officials gave it the priority it deserves. On the 4th of July a few years ago, City officials got on the radio and warned drivers not to risk gridlock by driving into Manhattan, urged everyone to use mass transit, and ran more subways. People had a wonderful time walking and biking through city

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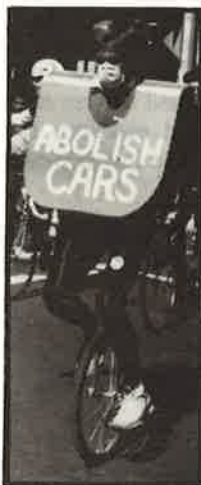


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streets. They flocked into the subways and buses, which ran every 2 minutes or less. And for one great day we had air that wasn't smoggy or poisoned with carbon monoxide.

What can all of us do to have more days like that?

1. Vote against the highway bond issue (Proposition 1) November 8.
2. Vote FOR the other ballot questions to change the city charter so that big campaign contributors don't have so much influence on public officials.
3. Ask candidates for office what they plan to do for mass transit, bicycles, and clean air. See if they do it.
4. Write to Governor Cuomo and tell him you want the Westway trade-in money applied directly to mass transit.
5. Write your representatives in the State legislature and Congress. Keep insisting on mass transit, biking, and clean air. ■



## CLEAN AIR HELPERS

Dozens of T.A. volunteers worked on postering, leafletting, design and publicity to make the Clean Air Rally a success. Special thanks to **John Jay** who created our beautiful hot-air balloon poster; **Carl Hultberg** and **Darren Reed** for postering and leaflet writing; **George Bliss** and friends who made the signs for the rally at George's studio; and **Jon Orcutt**, who built the stage, co-ordinated poster distribution and handled dozens of important details. Thanks also to musicians **Tim O'Connor**, **Mark Berger**, **Lach**, **Roger Manning**, **Tom Goodkind** and **Lauren Antonelli**.



### Eric A. Goldstein Natural Resources Defense Council

Some City officials think that New Yorkers don't care about air pollution in New York any more. Are they right?

Does anybody here care about smoking diesel bus fumes that are discharged every day into our streets and into our lungs?

Does anybody here care that we still don't have a regular program for bicycle lanes in this City, even though bicycles are the most pollution-free form of transportation?

Does anybody here care about the air we had in this City this past summer, which was often difficult to breathe, between the heat, the humidity and the ozone pollution? And does anybody care that New York City and State haven't been enforcing laws to get gasoline service stations and other ozone polluters to clean up their act?

We care about those things in NYC, don't we?

Here's the one thing you can all do immediately. There's a bill in the City Council, Intro 952A, introduced by Councilman Sheldon Leffler, Ruth Messinger, Susan Molinari and a host of City Council members, 16 in all. It would require New Yorkers to separate their garbage and achieve a 25 percent recycling rate in the City. This is a modest goal; it means we won't have to have as many and as large incinerators as the City now plans. City Council Majority Leader Vallone and Mayor Koch need to hear from you in support of Intro 952A now.

We can get clean air in the City. And it's terrific that even on a cold day like today you've all turned out to support that objective.

Thank you very much. Onward for clean air. ■