



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

PR12-06-077
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June 25, 2012
Page(s): 4

LIU: BIKE SHARE PROGRAM PEDALS PAST SAFETY MEASURES

10,000 bicycles could lead to more injuries, fatalities and increased legal claims

NEW YORK, NY - City Comptroller John C. Liu today released a comprehensive plan to help ensure the City’s Bike Share program, “Citi Bike,” is safe for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists alike. Nearly a month before the first 7,000 bicycles are set to hit the City’s streets, Liu put forth the recommendations designed to increase safety and reduce the City’s exposure to lawsuits.

“In the rush to place ten thousand bicycles on our streets, City Hall may have pedaled past safety measures, a move that risks significantly exacerbating the number of injuries and fatalities of both bikers and pedestrians, especially those most vulnerable like young children and seniors,” Comptroller Liu said. “Aside from the human toll, there is a real possibility that the Bike Share program will increase the number of legal claims against the City.”

Comptroller Liu announced his plan at a news conference in his office in Lower Manhattan, just blocks away from one of the City’s most dangerous intersection for cyclists, Delancey and Essex Streets.

Research has highlighted the dangers of bicycling in New York City. Specifically, recent studies have found that over a third of bicyclists run red lights, bike lanes are blocked 60 percent of the time by cars, trucks, and taxis and that New York City is one of the most dangerous cities in the United States for bicyclists.

Liu’s report titled “Bike Share in the City: A Comprehensive Safety Plan” can be found at www.comptroller.nyc.gov, and outlines a number of recommendations to ensure the physical health of riders and the fiscal health of the City.

Liu was joined at the event by Nancy Gruskin, Founder of the Stuart C. Gruskin Family Foundation, Hunter College Professors of Sociology and Urban Planning Doctors William Milczarski and Peter Tuckel, world-renowned neurosurgeon and President of the Brain Trauma Foundation Dr. Jamshid Ghajar, and Robert Sinclair Jr., Manager of Media Relations, AAA New York.

“I am delighted that the Gruskin Foundation's 5 to Ride PEDAL pledge is included in these important safety plans for the upcoming bike share," said Ms. Gruskin, who launched the

foundation after her husband Stuart was killed by a delivery cyclist three years ago. “If all cyclists abided by these five rules of the road, and restaurant owners educated their delivery cyclists, everyone would be safer.”

“New York City streets are being increasingly shared by cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists. Because of the simultaneous use, greater safety measures need to be implemented, existing laws need to be enforced more, and all street users need to be more educated about the rules of the road,” said Hunter College Professor of Urban Planning Dr. William Milczarski.

“Helmets save lives, even when you are going slowly on your bike,” said Dr. Jamshid Ghajar, head of the Brain Trauma Foundation. “Bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. Almost all bicyclists who died in accidents were not wearing helmets.”

“Safety concerns about Citi Bike stem from frequently blocked bike lanes, poor street conditions, inexperienced bicyclists, lax enforcement of traffic regulations, and the inevitability that some users will ride on sidewalks. On the basis of these traffic dangers, I would expect at least a doubling and possibly even a tripling in injuries and fatalities among cyclists and pedestrians during the first year of the Bike Share program in New York,” said Professor John Pucher of the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University and author of *City Cycling*. “More needs to be done to ensure the safety of both Citi Bike riders and pedestrians.”

“With so much congestion from huge numbers of people, cars and especially trucks, and poor pavement conditions, New York City is probably the most dangerous place in the world to ride a bicycle,” said Robert Sinclair Jr., Manager of Media Relations, AAA New York. “The injuries sustained by cyclists from confrontations with cars and trucks can be extremely severe including traumatic brain injuries. It seems counter to logic not to require Bike Share participants to wear helmets.”

With 10,000 bicycles, New York City’s Bike Share program, “Citi Bike,” will be the third largest in the world and the largest in North America, and would significantly alter the City’s landscape. For the past six months Comptroller Liu’s office has worked with various City agencies, subject matter experts, as well as representatives from global bike share programs to identify ways to ensure New York City’s program is as successful and safe as possible.

Comptroller Liu’s recommendations are as follows:

Support Safe Cyclists and a Safe Environment

Current conditions in New York City are relatively more dangerous for cyclists than other North American cities, such as Chicago and Washington DC. Comptroller Liu made the following recommendations to increase safety.

- **Make Bike Helmets Mandatory**: According to the Department of Transportation (DOT) in 97 percent of fatal bicycle accidents in NYC the rider was not wearing a helmet.
- **Maintain Signage, Bike Lanes and Safe Intersections**: Intersections are particularly hazardous to cyclists and the DOT should ensure that such locations are designed in a way that promotes safety.

- Expand Safe Streets for Seniors: Seniors suffer a disproportionately high rate of serious injuries from cyclists. The DOT should work to expand its current “Safe Streets for Seniors” program as more bicycles appear on City streets.

Educate All Road Users

All cyclists, pedestrians and drivers must be educated on bike safety and rules of the road. Although the DOT has prominently displayed messaging in print advertisements, bus shelters, and other visible locations, more can be done to educate road users.

- Expand Availability of Bicycle Safety Courses: To help manage the influx of riders, the City should partner with bicycle organizations and develop incentives for more people to take part in bike safety training.
- Incorporate Bicycle Awareness into Drivers’ Education: Expand the State DMV curriculum as it relates to bicycle safety and rules of the road.
- Teach Children to Bike Responsibly: Information on bicycle safety should be made available through the DOE
- Promote “5 to Ride” Pedal Pledge Program - The City should partner with the “5 to Ride” campaign which was started as a grassroots effort by the Stuart C. Gruskin Family Foundation to make City streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists – more information can be found at <http://5toride.org/>

Enforce the rules of the Road

With cyclists, drivers, and pedestrians educated on the rules of the road and interacting in a safe environment, the next step is to ensure that the rules are enforced.

- Increase the Number of Police Officers on Bicycles: In order to ensure enforcement of the rules, the NYPD should increase the number of officers on bicycles. This will also help target dangerous behavior, increase compliance, and minimize injuries.
- Target Dangerous Locations: Enforcement efforts should target the City’s busiest and most dangerous arterials and intersections.
- Interagency Coordination: There must be a smooth functioning communications loop among City agencies in order to ensure effective enforcement of the rules.

Mitigate Liability

Accidents will happen and in order to limit the City’s liability for legal claims, proper planning must take place.

- Increase Bike Share Insurance: The Bike Share operator has purchased liability insurance of up to \$10 million per year. However, \$10 million may be inadequate given the size of NYC’s program. For the first three years, the City should require NYC Bike Share to purchase increased liability coverage until there is enough historic data to indicate an appropriate amount of coverage.
- Adjust Crash Response Procedures: The NYPD should increase the number of Accident Investigation Squads in order to respond to and investigate underlying causes of accidents. Without such investigations, the insurance process is complicated and the City’s potential exposure to liability increases.

Increase Data Collection, Reporting and Publication

Transparency and robust data collection is a prerequisite to determining what is working correctly and what needs improvement.

- Create a “BikeStat” Website: DOT should create “BikeStat,” where anyone can obtain information and statistics on biking in NYC. This will help policy makers and planners coordinate information to address hazardous conditions, improve outreach and education, enhance enforcement strategies, and increase accident responsiveness. This would also empower community members with the necessary information to make neighborhood streets safer.

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