

Bicycle Urbanism Symposium - Abstract Submission

Title: Addressing Gender Differences to Increase Cycling

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Abstract: Women are substantially less likely than men to cycle in countries with low cycle mode share (Garrarda, Roseb, & Loc, 2008), (Garrard, Crawford, & Hakman, Revolutions for women : increasing women`s participation in cycling for recreation and transport, 2006), (Garrard, 2003). Therefore, women represent an under-tapped opportunity to increase the modal share of cycling. In many European countries, the gender split is much more balanced (for example, 55% of cyclists in the Netherlands are female). Women are more risk-averse than men, and therefore are considered an “indicator species” for safe bicycle infrastructure (Baker, 2009).

Women are also more likely to chain trips and transport passengers such as older adults and children, which may limit their uptake of cycling (Garrard, Handy, & Dill, 2012), (Emond, Tang, & Handy, 2009). The prevalence of bicycles designed to carry children and groceries in the Netherlands enables women to overcome this hurdle.



Dutch bicycle designed for carrying children and groceries

Historically, cycling contributed to women's emancipation (Garrard, Handy, & Dill, 2012). A quote from 1986 states that "to women, [the bicycle] was a steed upon which they rode into a new world" (Macy, 2011). Some things haven't changed. The Indian state of Bihar is providing every schoolgirl aged 14 with a bike, in order to enable girls to continue to attend school (Weiss, 2012).



Bicycles provided women with an increased degree of freedom



Girls in Bihar with government-provided bicycles

A few Canadian and American cities are creating safe bicycle infrastructure to lure women into cycling. Portland has created a cycle track, and both Vancouver and New York City have installed traffic-protected bike lanes (Baker, 2009). Planners and cycling advocates should focus on communicating the “fun” and “freedom” of cycling while addressing safety and convenience issues to increase cycling uptake for both genders.

Keywords: gender, cycling, safety

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