



City cycling

Camden Miller

To cite this article: Camden Miller (2018): City cycling, Community Development, DOI: [10.1080/15575330.2018.1529017](https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2018.1529017)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2018.1529017>



Published online: 10 Oct 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

City cycling, edited by John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2012, 416 pp., US\$32.95 (paperback), ISBN 9780262517812

The editors of *City Cycling*, John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, set out to provide a comprehensive overview of current cycling trends, policies, and research. Pucher and Buehler show that bicycling is not just for avid cyclers or athletes, but should be feasible for anyone and everyone regardless of gender, age, geographic location, background, or ability.

The wide range of cycling topics is organized into 15 chapters which provide: (1) introduction, (2) international overview, (3–4) health/cost/time, (5–7) bikes/paths/safety, (8–9) bike programs, (10–11) special needs for various groups, (12–14) trends and policies in cities of various sizes, and (15) promoting cycling. With contributions from 21 scholars in a variety of fields, this book addresses a spectrum of cycling topics, including public health, infrastructure and planning, architecture, civil and environmental engineering, social development, transportation, sustainability, environmental health, and geography.

Of particular importance is the discussion of physical, psychological, social, and environmental health issues. The physical and environmental benefits of cycling are particularly *en vogue*; however, psychological and social issues are sometimes overlooked. Problems, including the stress and anxiety of biking, the appearance of irresponsible parenting, and social inclusion and interactions, receive less attention. A comprehensive overview of the positives and negatives of cycling makes clear that the benefits vastly outweigh any detriments, prompting the question: Why does the incorporation of cycling facilities in certain countries' transportation infrastructure lag so far behind? While there is no single reason, and the root problems vary by area and context, the authors suggest a litany of possibilities, including a lack of information and awareness, liability associated with encouragement of biking, lack of available funding, theft and vandalism, issues with capacity, and feasibility issues with communities that were not designed to be compact, mixed use, and bike friendly. To make cycling safer and more feasible, the general consensus is that there is a need for better government policies, improved infrastructure for active cycling, and innovative programs.

Although *City Cycling* provides a comprehensive treatment of urban cycling, there were some gaps. First, the book focuses on the western world, with data and references to scholarly studies from Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. This focus might make the information less than universally applicable. Second, although the book considers various geographies and populations (e.g. the book includes chapters focused on women and children), it fails to address needs unique to low-income and disadvantaged populations. Such groups are often left out of conversations about cycling. The poor are often concentrated in neighborhoods that do not have good access to public transportation or bicycling infrastructure. Although the costs of maintaining a bicycle are trivial compared to the costs of owning a car, the lack of bicycle infrastructure in poor neighborhoods makes cycling an unobtainable transportation option for the poor.

Several chapters discuss the combined use of cycling with public transportation as a form of active transportation. Improvements could be made to this resource via an update on the location of bike share stations and their integration with public transportation. Bike share programs have drastically increased and expanded due to municipal investments. The

authors of the public transportation and bike share chapters highlight important nuances in trends related to this shift in transportation modes (e.g. an increase in cycling is not necessarily a decrease in drivers). They do not, however, discuss issues related to the location of bike share stations and their integration with public transportation within low-income neighborhoods. This perspective is largely unexamined in the cycling literature. With growing interest in the expansion of cycling options in cities, it should become part of the conversation. Bike share is growing at a rapid pace. As a consequence, there is a growing need for detail-oriented planning and greater attention to issues of equity in the distribution of resources. An update of this book should pay more attention to these concerns.

With cities investigating and experimenting with bicycle infrastructure now more than ever, this comprehensive guide could not have arrived at a better time. This book covers a wide range of topics related to bicycle transportation, providing critical analysis and insight into cycling and the role for planning. The approach allows for people of all backgrounds and interests, including practitioners, scholars, students, and even cyclists, to benefit and learn. The wide spectrum of topics that are covered, along with the detailed data and extensive references, inform the need for increased bicycle infrastructure and improved bicycle policy.

Camden Miller

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University at Buffalo

 camdenmi@buffalo.edu

© 2018 Camden Miller

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2018.1529017>

