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New Data Shows High Costs of Bicycle Injuries in Albany

Protected Bike Lanes could Save Big Bucks

Albany, New York – Data compiled by the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) brings home the true cost of bicycle crashes in Albany. NYSDOH’s Bureau of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention found that emergency room and hospital costs to treat bicycle crash victims totaled in excess of \$2 million dollars over a 3-year period (2010-2012) in Albany County. Approximately 13 percent of bicyclists involved in crashes in Albany County come to emergency rooms with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and TBI patients account for 42 percent of bicyclists hospitalized for treatment. The mean charge per bicyclist emergency room visit is \$1,838, and a cyclist who has to be hospitalized will incur a whopping charge of \$56,442. ([See attached data](#)).

While two million dollars is a large number, it does not account for a whole host of other public costs. The medical and other expenses of cyclists who died are not included. Nor are the costs of rehabilitation, lost mobility, emotional duress or long-term disability. Non-health related costs such as police and emergency worker costs, legal fees, lost work productivity and tax revenues, and family impacts are also not taken into account.

The Madison Avenue road diet plan holds the potential to increase safety for everyone who uses the road. Data from several sources clearly indicates the danger of the road continuing in its current, free-for-all state. Implementation of protected bike lanes along the corridor will separate cyclists from traffic, increasing their safety considerably and reducing costs to society, the healthcare system, and government.

Given that bicyclists are disproportionately people of color and lower income, and that the NYSDOH data shows children are the most likely group of cyclists to make ER visits in Albany, these massive costs are an obvious equity concern that could be largely remedied by the implementation of protected infrastructure for bicyclists. The expenses are also a concern for local budgets. For example, a portion of Medicare bills (which cover medical expenses for low-income residents) must be paid by local government—local government pays 25 percent of acute care costs and nine percent of long-term care costs incurred within county borders.

Albany sees a significant number of crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists. According to a recent Tri-State Transportation Campaign analysis of NYS Department of Transportation data, over a three-year time period covering 2009-2012, the City of Albany recorded 852 total crashes, 600 involving

pedestrians and 252 involving bicyclists. That accounts for 63 percent of the 1,345 total bike- and pedestrian-involved crashes in Albany County over that same time span. The City of Albany's June 2013 Madison Avenue Traffic Study/Road Diet Feasibility Study, prepared by Creighton Manning Engineering, found 481 crashes in the corridor over a three-year time period from November 2008 to October 2011, of which 32 involved pedestrians or bicyclists. At least 16.4 percent of all crashes in the corridor resulted in injury, and there were two fatalities. The study found that at least 55 percent of all crashes could potentially be prevented by a road diet.

"Protected bike lanes save cities like Albany by not only reducing the number of vehicle-bike incidents, but save emergency response resources in responding to these often-preventable situations. As a bicyclist myself, there is a need for ensuring all users of the road – bicycles, motor vehicles, and pedestrians – can be safe at all times. With this analysis by the State Department of Health showing the devastating effects of bike-vehicle-pedestrian crashes, the proposed road diet on Madison Avenue will help make our city safer," said Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy.

"As a Council Member, I understand the city's very real budgetary constraints. Implementing protected bike lanes will only help the City of Albany's bottom line. By reducing the number of crashes, our police and fire departments will have decreased calls that require their response—saving in overtime costs for city taxpayers. Protected bicycle lanes would also be key in attracting millennials and small businesses to choose Albany. When NYC redesigned Union Square to include protected bicycle lanes, there were 49% fewer commercial vacancies—that's compared to a 5% increase in commercial vacancies throughout Manhattan. When you look at a full cost-benefit analysis, the city of Albany can't afford not to build protected bike lanes," said Hon. Leah Golby, Common Council Member for the 10th Ward (Pine Hills and Park South).

"While there may be some modest increased costs related to installing a protected bike lane, those costs cannot be considered in a silo. A consideration of all costs and needs show that Albany's true fiscally responsible choice is to pursue protected lanes on Madison," said Nadine Lemmon, New York and Federal Policy Coordinator for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

"Creating bicycle lanes that are physically separated from automotive traffic is the key to attracting cyclists who want to ride, but who are concerned about safety. In Albany, about a quarter of households do not have cars. Albany needs complete streets that make it possible for all its citizens—transit users, cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers—to get where they are going safely and efficiently. Protected bicycle lanes on Madison Avenue is a critical step in this direction," said Jason D'Cruz, UAlbany professor and member of the Albany Protected Bicycle Lanes Coalition.

"As the leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, Parks & Trails New York understands the health, economic, and quality of life benefits that come from parks and trails. On-road infrastructure, such as protected bike lanes, serves as an important connection between residents and community parks, trails, and open spaces," said Robin Dropkin, Executive Director Parks & Trails New York.

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.