

# Usefulness article review

Sport & Tourism



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## **Article Review Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy in the USA**

### Introduction

This paper reviews and analyzes a published article that deals with bicycle and pedestrian public policy in the USA. The subject article was published in the New York Times on 4 July 2011 and was entitled: “ The Bicycle Dividend”, by Nancy Folbre.

### **Article Summary:**

Folbre opens the article with the statement that more Americans are either cycling or walking to and from work, partly because the infrastructure is being improved through public sector investment, which soon will provide safe cycle paths and lanes. See “ Bicycle and Pedestrian”, updated Sept 2013, for further details). She notes that since 2006 federal spending on that infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians has more than doubled, but as of 2010 still amounted to a mere \$4 per person. The picture is patchy (see “ National Report Ranks Cities and States for Bicycling and Walking”, Jan 2012). Some U. S. cities have made great strides in catering for the bikers, New York for example having expanded the numbers of bike paths recently. Although some people resent that development as “ invasions of sacred car space”, a majority seem to welcome it.

Folbre points out that heavy subsidies for car use far exceed taxes on fuel, etc, yet car use contributes to climate change, traffic congestion, causes fatal accidents and encourages what Folbre terms “ sedentary lifestyles.” In contrast, biking is healthy and is of benefit to our environment, and cycling is much cheaper than joining a gym. Also – as a nation – reduced gas consumption helps improve our air quality and cuts oil imports. Because

circa 40 percent of car journeys in urban areas are shorter than two miles, bike use is ideal. However, compared with some other countries, we are lagging behind in bike use. Our one percent bike use for local trips is way behind that of Denmark at 18 percent and the Netherlands at 27 percent. Encouragement for bike use in European cities includes good public transportation services and an expanding trend of bike-sharing programs. And the more people use bikes, the safer it becomes, as bike lanes on the roads attract greater numbers of cyclists. Women especially rate the safety aspect as important. Also as cycling to work becomes more accepted, Folbre reports that businesses are providing changing and shower facilities (less expensive than parking spaces). She also notes that not only will more bike path construction programs create much-needed jobs, they will make our travel to work easier and healthier.

### **Article Review:**

The article provides an interesting and informative insight into the growing popularity of bicycle travel in the U. S., which more than once points out the obvious health benefits and environmental advantages of leaving the car at home. Surprisingly, Folbre doesn't make much of one obvious motivation for people changing over to biking to work – the need to cut down costs in this recessionary climate. Health benefits are of course a powerful incentive, and although the cycle ride to and from work can perhaps obviate the need for gym membership (and the costs thereof), surely a major focus for many will be the saving in gas and in all probability parking charges, too.

Although the article very briefly mentions pedestrian infrastructure in the second paragraph of the article, it is not mentioned again, leaving the reader

to wonder what the authorities might be doing to help improve pedestrian access to city centers, etc.

On a positive note, the article refers to efforts across the country to improve the bicycle infrastructure, which no doubt will have encouraged many New York Times readers to become bicycle commuters. Overall, the article seemed without undue bias, fairly reporting the situation as it stands today.

For those worried about increasing car running costs and/or an expanding waistline, this article may well have made a considerable number of converts to the world of the biking commuters. A good thing on several fronts on a personal level and for the environment, too.

## References

“ Bicycle and Pedestrian”. (Updated Sept 2013). Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). Retrieved from [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/)

Folbre, Nancy. (4 July 2011). “ The Bicycle Dividend.” New York Times. Retrieved from [http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/04/the-bicycle-dividend/?\\_r=1](http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/04/the-bicycle-dividend/?_r=1)

“ National Report Ranks Cities and States for Bicycling and Walking.” (Jan 2012). Alliance for Biking & Walking. Retrieved from <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs002/1102329622679/archive/1109112110808.html>