

## BMTS Article Digest February – March 2010

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of [www.bmtsonline.com](http://www.bmtsonline.com).

Scott

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Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletterarchives.php>

**CenterLines** is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.

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### **Parks & Trails New York Announces 2010 New York Greenway and Community Trail Award Winners**

Winners will be honored at a ceremony in Albany on June 8.

**Volunteer Service Award** - *Elisa Zazzera and Joe Kozlowski* for engaging local community groups in the clean up and promotion of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail in the City of Yonkers.

**Public Leadership Award** - *Dorothy Lewandowski and Velma Segars* of the New York City Parks and Recreation Department for their efforts to create, map, and promote the New York City Water Trail, a collection of 38 waterfront sites that provide access to 160 square miles of rivers, bays, creeks, inlet and ocean in the City's five boroughs.

**Corporate Partnership Award** - *Eastern Mountain Sports, Mohawk Commons Store* for its multiple years of financial and employee support of clean up and beautification of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the City of Schenectady.

**Healthy Trails, Healthy People Award** – The “dynamic duo” of *Mark Bowers* of the New York State Department of Transportation and *Scott Reigle* of the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study for their leadership, compassion, and dedication to engaging local governments, the health care sector, and many other community organizations in the creation of the more than 30-mile Greater Binghamton Greenway /Binghamton River Trail spanning two counties and seven municipalities.

**Outside the Box Award** – *Fred Schaeffer* of Poughkeepsie for his vision that foresaw the possibility of using the Poughkeepsie-Highland railroad bridge as a trail connecting Ulster and Dutchess Counties and for his tenacity and leadership that inspired public and private sources to contribute more than \$32 million to turn the bridge into the Walkway over the Hudson.

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\* Kudos to Mayor Ryan! See article below.

pressconnects.com

## Binghamton High students detail parking woes to city mayor

By George Basler • [gbasler@gannett.com](mailto:gbasler@gannett.com) •

February 18, 2010, 10:35 pm

BINGHAMTON -- Binghamton High School students said they're tired of feeding meters and dealing with parking problems.

That was the message they gave Thursday to Mayor Matthew T. Ryan who met with Student Council after school to talk about concerns and issues facing the city.

But the students got little sympathy from Ryan who questioned why so many drive to school if they don't have jobs or other commitments. He suggested they take public transportation, walk or ride bikes. That's both healthy and more environmentally friendly, Ryan said.

One reason the school has a parking problem is because it lacks a student lot, said Student Council President Cody Clifford. Students are forced to find spaces in the neighborhood or park on Oak and Main streets with meters that have two-hour limits, he said.

Clifford asked that the city extend the time limit to four hours.

But the reason for the meters is to make sure nobody parks too long in spaces designed for business customers, Ryan said.

"You're parking in neighborhoods around here, parking in parking spots that are really meant for the people who live in those houses," he told the students.

Waiting for a bus, or walking to the high school from her residence on Lydia Street, is tough in the cold weather, said sophomore Keianna Dugger, 16.

"Put on an extra sweatshirt. You'll feel better when you get to school," Ryan said.

Ryan advised students if they're really serious about the parking issue, they should put together a committee to survey businesses about how many parking spaces they need.

"If you find out they don't need so many spaces, maybe we could change the hours (on the parking meters)," Ryan said. "You have to make your case."

Student Council will work to appoint a committee, Clifford said. He appreciated Ryan's candor.

"I think he talked to our level pretty good. He got his points across to all students," Clifford said.

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# Sightline Daily

NORTHWEST NEWS THAT MATTERS

## Fewer Cars, Safer Mortgages

Posted by Clark Williams-Derry

02/08/2010 11:30 AM

A low-car neighborhood reduces the risk of mortgage default.

Interesting. The [Journal of Sustainable Real Estate](#) recently accepted a paper showing that, after controlling for incomes, neighborhoods with low car ownership have fewer defaults on mortgages. [NRDC took a look](#) at the

findings, and concluded that factors such as **neighborhood compactness, access to public transit, and rates of vehicle ownership are key to predicting mortgage performance** and should be taken more seriously by mortgage underwriters, policymakers, and real estate developers.

In their review, NRDC suggests a few reasons why neighborhood car ownership is so closely linked with mortgage defaults. First, folks who live in transit-oriented neighborhoods face lower financial risks when gas prices spike -- which is just what they did in the runup to housing market collapse in 2008. Second, homes in transit- and pedestrian-friendly locales retain their resale value better than homes in sprawling suburbs -- so mortgages are less likely to go "underwater," with homeowners owing more on their mortgages than the house is worth. Third, all else being equal, homes in transit-oriented neighborhoods sell quickly -- so homeowners who can't make their mortgage payments can sell their homes rather than fall into default.

The study's not in print yet, but I'd be interested in seeing what other demographic factors besides income the authors controlled for. What if folks in low-density exurbs are younger than average, or have more kids per household? If so, they may have fewer savings or higher monthly costs -- which could also elevate foreclosures. In that case, car ownership and mortgage defaults would merely be linked by correlation, not by causation.

Regardless, this study is just the latest in a growing pile of evidence that living in a transit- or pedestrian friendly neighborhood may be able to protect household budgets. As the [Center for Neighborhood Technology has shown](#), when you combine both housing and transportation costs, living in a seemingly "affordable" suburb can actually be more expensive than living in a place where you don't need a car for every trip. And researcher [Joe Cortright](#) has found that, after controlling for other housing amenities, high walkability (as measured by a home's [Walk Score](#)) can add tens of thousands of dollars to a home's value -- a finding that adds some weight to NRDC's contention that high resale values in transit-oriented neighborhoods protect against mortgage default.

*[Image by Brendel, via [Wikimedia Commons](#).]*

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## Obama walks to White House to improve cholesterol

By NATASHA T. METZLER (AP) – March 1, 2010

WASHINGTON — Poll results, congressional head counts and federal deficits aren't the only numbers President Barack Obama has to worry about. Now, he's trying to walk off a marginally high cholesterol count.

Although Obama took the presidential motorcade to a speech Monday morning, he decided to walk back through Lafayette Park. A day earlier, his doctor recommended that he lower his cholesterol. The president told reporters he needed to "make sure that I'm walking off some of that cholesterol. That's a year of campaigning right there."

Obama had a physical exam Sunday morning, where he learned that his total cholesterol and so-called bad, or LDL, cholesterol had both spiked into the borderline high range since his last reported exam in 2007.

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**chicagotribune.com**

### ***Google gets bike-friendly***

### **Map feature adding routes and trips for cyclists in Chicago and 149 other cities**

By Jon Hilkevitch, Tribune reporter

12:15 AM CST, March 10, 2010

The world's most popular Internet search engine is getting more bicycle-friendly.

On Wednesday, Google will unveil a service offering bicycling directions on its Google Maps feature.

Hard-core and recreational cyclists will be able to use the Web-based technology to plan trips or explore biking trails and routes in Chicago and 149 other U.S. cities, Google officials said.

Several online bike-trip sites already exist. But bicycling advocates hope Google's entrance in the market benefits not only individual riders but Chicago's transit system as a whole. One goal is to make it easier for non- or infrequent cyclists to access the service, thereby promoting more bicycling.

The Web address for the service is [maps.google.com/biking](http://maps.google.com/biking).

After typing in start and end points and selecting "Bicycling" on the drop-down menu, a user will be provided with itineraries and estimated travel times, although trip times undoubtedly will vary depending on the pedaling power of the individual.

But to allow for such variations, the step-by-step biking directions factor in the length of the trip, changes in elevation and even fatigue, Google officials said.

Until now, Google Maps was limited to helping drivers and mass-transit users navigate their way around. The new trip-planning software for cyclists will be especially useful in Chicago, which has more than 200 miles of bikeways, including dedicated on-street bike lanes and marked shared lanes.

"This is the next move in what we think mapmaking should be," said Jim Lecinski, managing director for Google in the U.S. and former head of Google's operations in Chicago and the Midwest. "Streets are not just for cars."

Currently, Chicago closes off Lake Shore Drive to vehicles one day a year so cyclists can own the road for a few hours, and the city devotes an entire month to promote and celebrate bicycling. Could Google's new venture mean more commuters may soon start wearing Spandex shorts while traveling to work?

Bicycling advocates think so. While Google isn't the first company to offer online trip planning for alternative forms of transportation, including walking, it is the largest.

Avid bicyclist Kevin Conway said he is eager to give Google a spin to see whether it's better than its competitors. Conway has a couple of bike-trip planning sites bookmarked on his computer, but he doesn't find them particularly useful.

"There are a couple of bad ones out there," said Conway, 50, an attorney who biked to work downtown from his home in the Wicker Park neighborhood 230 days last year and who hasn't missed a day so far this year.

"A lot of the sites are less sophisticated about choosing more bike-friendly routes versus the shortest distance between two points," he said.

While withholding judgment until he's tried the new service, he is especially looking forward to Google's promise of providing turn-by-turn directions, he said.

The Google bike-trip planner will not immediately be available on cell phones and other wireless devices, but company officials said they are working on a mobile application so that cyclists can look up directions while on their bikes.

Google Maps' new software program includes recommended cycling routes for specific point-to-point travel and maps that show bike trails, on-street bike lanes and bike-friendly roads.

Bicyclists can also use other features in Google Maps, including Street View, to receive turn-by-turn directions or preview the width of a bike lane, company officials said.

Another feature, Local Search, guides cyclists to locations where they can take a break or find bike shops along the route.

The biking directions provide time estimates for routes based on an algorithm that takes into account the length of the route, the number of hills, fatigue over time, and other variables, Google officials said.

Other existing trip-planning services for bicyclists include [ridethecity.com](http://ridethecity.com) and [mapmyride.com](http://mapmyride.com).

But bicycling advocates say Google's entry will be a game-changer because it will reach the masses, including anybody at a computer who enters "bike" into a Google search.

"Google is already a tool that people use every day," said Margo O'Hara, a spokeswoman for the Active Transportation Alliance. "To expand the choices where people are already looking for directions will make more people think about getting around by bike and show them how quickly they can do it in a bike-friendly city."

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