

BMTS Article Digest October - November 2021

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 from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page at <http://bmtsonline.com/about/committees>.



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npr **WSKG** EUROPE

It started with 5 families. Now hundreds are biking to school together in Barcelona

October 22, 2021 5:00 AM ET

DEEPA SHIVARAM



Children joining the *bicibús* in the Eixample district of Barcelona, Spain, make their way to school on a recent Friday morning. The community is hoping to build a school-friendly bike lane for a safer commute for kids.
Mireia Boix/Bicibús Eixample

The Friday commute to school looks a little different for some kids in Barcelona, Spain.

Starting at 8 a.m., more than a hundred kids and parents hop on their

bikes and hit the road on their way to school and work. Not on the sidewalk or in a bike lane, but in the middle of the street.

Dozens of children ride bikes and scooters — and even skate — down empty streets, seen in videos and photos posted to [social media](#).

The system has been dubbed bicibús, or bike bus, and began in the Eixample district of Barcelona in September.

Families in the area are using the [growing popularity](#) of the bike commute to build community — and also fight for a safer, more environmentally friendly way for their kids to get to school.

“It all started with a group of five families, a lot of determination and a deep sense of the greater good,” Mireia Boix, a parent who rides with her 5-year-old son, told NPR in an email.

Building a healthier city

The bicibús operates similar to the way a school bus would but with three “stops” along the way where more riders join as it travels to several schools in the Eixample.

Parents often join in, some of them carrying younger children on their bikes. [Police vehicles](#) have started to escort the group, with officers traveling in the front, back and on the sides of the group, Boix said.

In Eixample, the bicibús travels down Entença Street, where three schools are located; the ride from start to finish lasts about [25 minutes](#). Boix said it’s a busy road where about [20,000 vehicles](#) drive through every day. It makes the surrounding area loud and busy. And for kids getting to school, it can be dangerous. Boix said with the bicibús, she feels a sense of relief when her son bikes to school on Fridays because she knows he’ll be safe.

That’s why parents in the community are hoping for a school-friendly bike lane that is separated from the main traffic that would allow children to bike with their families. This kind of lane already exists in other parts of Barcelona, Boix said.



Boix says the city council has made some changes to make the street safer, but it hasn’t made much of an impact.

A police vehicle travels at the front of the bicibús in the Eixample district in Barcelona. When the cyclists start their commute on Friday mornings, they have help from local officials to keep everyone safe.
Mireia Boix/ Bicibús Eixample

“It would reduce the amount of cars and it would make bike riding a possibility for families that right now are not too sure and feel insecure with the area,” she said.

“Bicycles are a means of transportation and if a 5-year-old can ride a bike to school it means that every one else could. If the population uses their bikes, there will be a healthier, quieter and overall better city to live in,” Boix said.

Other [neighborhoods](#) in Barcelona and other parts of Spain have similar bicibus traditions, as well.

A sense of camaraderie and companionship

Boix said she finds herself waking up earlier than usual every Friday out of excitement for the ride. She and her son ride their bikes to school in the morning most days. On the day of the bicibús, she said, he “enjoys the ride and the freedom.”



NATIONAL Shifting Gears: Commuting Aboard The L.A. Bike Trains

The joy, even just watching videos on social media, is infectious. Bystanders stop and take pictures of the group. Some of the children even sport bicibús [jerseys](#). Some on social media have [commented](#) on how the bicibús shows what it means to rethink public space. Boix said the camaraderie and companionship that have come with organizing and taking part in the rides becomes a little emotional, too.

“We have all felt emotional in one of the rides at some point. It is a group of people convinced that things can be done a bit differently,” she said. “That we are not asking for something strange or impossible.”

THE PATH FORWARD

Dryden opens rail trail section through state's last game farm

Matt Steecker

Ithaca Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK



A bridge on the Dryden Rail Trail.

PROVIDED/TOWN OF DRYDEN

Following decades of work to reclaim a 0.4-mile section of an abandoned railroad corridor, Dryden officials this month opened the newest part of the

Dryden Rail Trail.

The property includes a rail bed that runs through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Reynolds Game Farm — the last operating game farm in the state, according to Dan Lamb, Dryden Town Board deputy supervisor.

Prior to the opening of the property for public use, access to the property was restricted to the DEC for more than 90 years, Lamb said.

When completed, the Dryden Rail Trail will span the entire town, connecting the East Ithaca Recreation Way on the west all the way to the Jim Schug section on the east. The trail will connect the Village of Dryden to Freeville, Etna, Varna, Cornell and the City of Ithaca, and it will form a key linkage across the county's 240 miles of interconnected trails.

The Town of Dryden and the DEC reached a 20-year agreement for the trail after years of meetings and negotiations. In order to reach this agreement, the town had to convince supporters of the game farm that the trail would support rather than threaten the state's last pheasant raise and release program.

Both towns are working with Tompkins County on a plan for a new Game Farm Road crossing. In the meantime, the public can access the new section from Stevenson Road.

The scenic stretch crosses Cascadilla Creek and features two restored historic railroad timber-trestle bridges. The trail is covered with a stone dust surface and is ADA accessible, inviting activities such as hiking, cycling, skiing, horseback riding, e-bikes, and bird watching.

Lamb called the agreement unprecedented for how the town and the state collaborated on the project. The state had to enter in a certificate of occupancy and use permit, which is usually used for buildings instead of trails.

"I'm guessing there is nothing like this in New York State for access to trails," Lamb said. "They had to think of something creative to allow people onto the property."

Clearing a path forward

Prior to opening the new section of the trail, the Dryden Highway Department worked on restoring the area. The bridges at the site were buried in sediment, dirt and underbrush, so the highway department worked on clearing the dirt and excess vegetation in June and July, Lamb said.

"Last spring, this section was overgrown and completely impassable," said Rick Young, Dryden Town Highway Superintendent, in a press release. "Our guys cleared their way to the two old railroad bridges."

Young continued: "They removed rotted sections, built new members, reinforced portions, and gave the trestles a new life."

Recently, the town finished work by covering the old rail bed with a stone dust trail surface.

The DEC had suggested that the town would have to demolish the old trestles and construct expensive new bridges.

However, a town-commissioned engineering report showed that the historic bridges, which were strong enough to support train traffic for a century, could be safely repaired and then used by pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians, according to Bob Beck, Dryden Rail Trail Task Force chair.

Funding for the section is part of a \$182,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through the Environmental Protection Fund. That grant, awarded in 2017, required an equal match by the town which the town has offered to meet by providing its own labor, according to Lamb.

The focus of this section has been on rehabilitating 5.5 miles of the town's abandoned rail corridor, through trail clearing, developing parking lots and trailheads, and repairing infrastructure.

Ithaca's local TRIAD Foundation also provided a \$15,000 grant to purchase materials for the renovated, historic trestles.

The trail was first proposed in 2005, but didn't make substantial progress until 2016 due to challenges town leaders faced with getting through the game farm, getting over Route 13 and obtaining easements from private landowners, according to Lamb. In 2016, Lamb created the Rail Trail Task Force after being appointed as deputy town supervisor.

Lamb: Homeowners, tourism will benefit

Homeowners enjoy having access to the Rail Trail, according to Lamb.

"They love it because it gives them access, improves their quality of life, increases property values and is good for business," Lamb said. "We have new businesses to want their employees to have access to this and commercial housing that's being built or proposed."

He continued: “Developers see it as a selling point for current or future tenants.”

To date, the Dryden Town Board has raised more than \$2.2 million of the estimated \$2.9 million Rail Trail project, according to Lamb.

“This trail is about building community and bringing tourism to Dryden,” Lamb said in a press release. “It’s about education, recreation and wellness for everyone.”

Lamb continued: “It provides an alternative commuter and transportation path that will reduce automobile use and greenhouse gas emissions. It supports town, county, and state energy strategy goals, too.”

CITYLAB

As E-Bikes Speed Up, a Policy Dilemma Looms

The newest electric bikes can go much faster than pedal-only riders, which could spur a backlash from pedestrians and a crackdown from regulators.

By [David Zipper](#)

October 29, 2021, 7:00 AM EDT



When does an e-bike start being a motorcycle? Photographer: Westend61/Westend61 via Getty Images

Earlier this month Dutch e-bike maker VanMoof unveiled its powerful new [V model](#), which comes with two motors, a 700-watt engine, and [a top speed of 37 miles per hour](#). With an expected price of \$3,598 in the United States, the V is scheduled to hit the streets at the end of 2022.

For a bicycle, the V is fast — really fast. To offer a comparison, 37 mph exceeds the all-time record for average speed in a [Tour de France time trial](#). Rather than call the V an e-bike, VanMoof [describes](#) it as a “hyperbike,” a term the company created. [Cofounder Ties Carlier](#) says that the V “will be the most efficient and comfortable way to get around cities like London, Tokyo and Los Angeles.”

VanMoof is not the only company pushing the envelope on a bike's speed and power. A New Zealand company called Speedi offers a device that can supposedly hack an e-bike's sensors to boost speed by 50%. Meanwhile, the Vintage Electric Roadster already goes 40 mph, and a vehicle called the Revolution X is advertised as reaching 60 mph. (Such bikes typically have a setting that can restrict speed.) These machines are blurring the already murky distinctions between electric bikes and faster, more powerful mopeds, motor scooters, and motorcycles.



A rendering of VanMoof's upcoming V model, a high-speed "hyperbike" capable of 37 mph. Source: VanMoof

From a policymaking perspective, should a 37-mph e-bike still count as a bicycle, or should it be regulated like faster vehicles with a throttle? Motorcycles and mopeds are often subject to an array of laws and restrictions that e-bikes aren't, such as license plate mandates, helmet requirements, and special driver's licenses. Such distinctions break down for the new class of high-speed e-bikes. After all, any two-wheeled vehicles traveling at 40 mph likely create comparable risk to the rider as well as other street users.

Achieving the right policy balance is tricky. Lax rules for super-fast bikes could place cyclists and pedestrians in danger, but overly onerous ones could jeopardize the opportunity for two-wheeled vehicles to supplant the automobile, a transition that many environmental and urban advocates are eager to see.

Ready or not, cities and states will need to decide how to navigate a strange new world of hyper-charged two-wheelers.

It's easy to see how we arrived at this moment. The e-bike market is exploding, posting an annual growth rates of 240% in the U.S., according to the market research firm NPD Group, and driving rival manufacturers to search for an edge. "Bike companies want to innovate and break

records,” says Noa Banayan, the director of federal affairs for PeopleforBikes, an industry group. “That’s something you’re seeing evolving with e-bikes right now.”

For VanMoof’s Carlier, designing the V for speed was a no-brainer. “We have 150,000 riders around the world,” he says, “and almost all of them want the option to go faster.”

Carlier says he doesn’t expect V riders to go flat-out on a downtown ride; automobiles, he notes, are almost always driven well below their top speeds (which, notably, are far above prevailing speed limits). “Twenty miles per hour is very suitable for the center city,” he says. “The V is a bike for going outside the city. We’re looking beyond the bike lane.” Carlier envisions cyclists using the V to commute from the suburbs, mixing with cars and trucks on main roads as they approach the urban boundary — at which point V riders will slow before continuing their journey.

Carlier says that VanMoof is in discussions with Dutch cities about arranging a geofence that uses sensors to automatically slow speedy V riders who cross into a designated area. The use of such geofences is now common with shared scooters, though it is seldom seen on privately owned vehicles. But the idea seems to be catching on: BMW recently introduced a concept bike that also accommodates geofenced speeds.

Aware of the V’s power, Carlier believes that government oversight is necessary. “There should be a minimum age and driver’s license,” he says. But he demurs on other possible limitations, such as requiring insurance or limiting where a V could be ridden.

For now, though, the regulatory landscape for a 37-mph e-bike is muddled in the United States. In 2002, the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission established a general definition of e-bikes (under 750 watts of power and a top speed of 20 mph), but states typically determine whether such vehicles must be registered, while cities decide where they can be ridden. More than 30 states have now adopted a three-tiered classification system developed by the bike industry. The fastest Class 3 e-bikes are limited to 28 mph. (A few stragglers like Massachusetts still have yet to codify their e-bike rules, though a new bill may address that.) Congress used the three-class system in its current proposal for a federal e-bike tax credit, meaning that bikes like the VanMoof V that exceed 28 mph wouldn’t be eligible for it.

So where does all of this leave an electric bicycle that goes faster than a Class 3 e-bike? Basically, in limbo. “It’s an out-of-class vehicle,” says Banayan. “How a vehicle like that is regulated is up to the states, and there aren’t yet any clear trends on how they are addressing these products.”

Outreach to state officials seems to support her claim: A spokesperson of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles confirmed in an email that an e-bike capable of exceeding 28 mph would “not fall within an existing statutory classification in the Code of Virginia.” A representative of the Delaware Department of Motor Vehicles responded that “typically these e-bikes would be classified as a moped,” before issuing the caveat that Delaware defines a

moped as having an electric motor with a minimum of 751 watts — which would seemingly exclude the VanMoof V at 700 watts.

Some bike manufacturers seem fine with the confusing status quo.

Super73's [website](#) advertises its 2,000-watt S2 as “a high-performance, street-legal electric motorbike that does not require a license or registration.” Another, Onyx, includes a good question on its [FAQ page](#) “Can I register my bike as a moped?” before offering a non-answer: “If you’d like you can register your bike as a moped.”

Sam Zimbabwe, the director of the Seattle Department of Transportation, doubts that many buyers of fast e-bikes will even notice the regulatory confusion. “Some people will buy a bike and read the regs, but many more will just go ride” he says. Zimbabwe hasn’t heard much yet from Seattleites about high-speed e-bikes, but he “wants to get ahead of it.”

“We’re building our bike infrastructure assuming people are going at roughly the same speed,” he says. “In a five-foot bike lane, you can pass, but it’s not very comfortable. If faster e-bikes create more congestion in our bike lanes, we probably need to widen them.”

Cities like Seattle have a variety of other policy options available too, such as adding speed limit signage in bike lanes and trails, expanding speed enforcement efforts, and asking states to create new registration rules specific to faster e-bikes (perhaps including a revision to the 3-class system to add a category for bikes exceeding 28 mph).

The longer these faster e-bikes fall into a regulatory no man’s land, the higher the risk of a popular backlash.

But the idea of adding regulatory hoops worries Carlos Pardo, a senior advisor at the New Urban Mobility Alliance, which is housed within the nonprofit World Resources Institute. “The beauty of e-bikes is that you can have the battery power without the hassle of registering, like with a motorcycle,” he says. Pardo wants to avoid even applying the term “e-bike” to the new crop of fast two-wheelers. When VanMoof unveiled the V, he [tweeted](#) at the company: “your upcoming 37 mph ‘hyperbike’ is not a bicycle or e-bike, and no regulation should be adapted to change that. It is a ‘motorbike.’”

Pardo sees big risks if high-speed vehicles are still considered to be e-bikes. “Why would you create a new category that might lead some people to say, ‘Oh, I hate e-bikes — they go so fast?’” he asks.

He has a point. With a familiar form factor, a tiny carbon footprint, and a growing legion of fans, e-bikes are the current darling of urban mobility. Sustainable mobility advocates have praised their potential to expand bicycling’s appeal among [older people](#), sweat-averse commuters, and those who need to haul kids and cargo. But high-speed e-bikes could spur a backlash from pedestrians and slower, pedal-only cyclists who worry about their own safety (and from drivers who never liked bikes much to begin with). Rising complaints could push city officials

toward some kind of visible response — even if it ultimately makes matters worse (as has happened with Washington, D.C.'s new lock-to requirement for shared e-scooters).

Banayan believes that the threat is real. “At the local level, there is some concern that out-of-class vehicles could threaten the rights of e-bike riders,” she says. Since e-bikes often look similar to one another, it’s hard to enforce rules aimed only at the fastest models. Overzealous legislators might then enact regulations for all e-bikes. In a nightmare scenario, that could involve a blanket ban on e-bikes from bike paths or a requirement that owners register, license and insure their vehicles like a motorcycle. Such constraints would surely dampen enthusiasm for acquiring an e-bike and using it in lieu of a car.

And to further complicate things, how will regulators handle nascent micromobility form factors like cargo delivery bikes, e-trikes or quadricycles that don’t fit cleanly into the bike/car dichotomy — but could address needs that traditional bikes often cannot (such as storage capacity, weather protection, or mobility enhancement for those with disabilities)? Are we doomed to endlessly revise new regulations in response to the latest vehicle models?

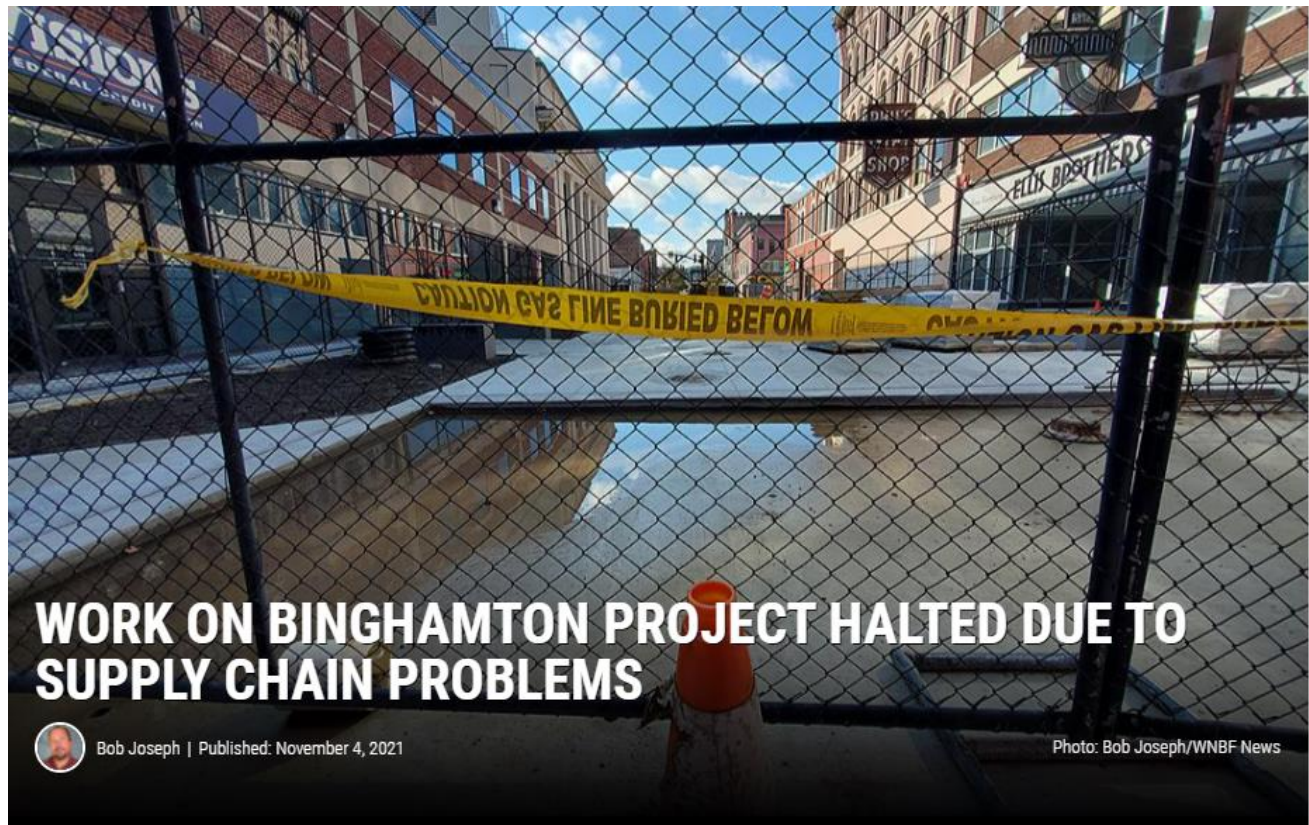
Arizona State University urban planning professor David King recommends a different approach. Rather than constantly adjusting regulations to reflect evolving form factors, King suggests that officials establish clear, simple rules for what’s permissible on a given type of infrastructure, whether it be a bike lane, arterial, sidewalk, or something else. “We can simply set some parameters for a street or a lane,” he says, “like ‘Here’s the speed, weight, and size limit — and within those, go nuts.’”

Such policies could empower innovators to develop new street-legal vehicles within governmental parameters, while at the same time enhancing safety by letting those that produce comparable kinetic energy travel alongside one another.

King’s approach leaves many open questions, including the potential creation of a new kind of lane that’s between those currently used for bikes and cars. Along those lines, Pardo proposed in Next City a network of “light lanes” designed to accommodate faster micromobility vehicles.

Whatever governments decide to do, they would be wise to get moving. High-speed e-bikes and other category-blurring electric vehicles are already available, and their numbers will only grow. The longer they fall into a regulatory no man’s land, the higher the risk of a popular backlash that leads to regulatory overreactions or misidentification of the safety issues at stake.

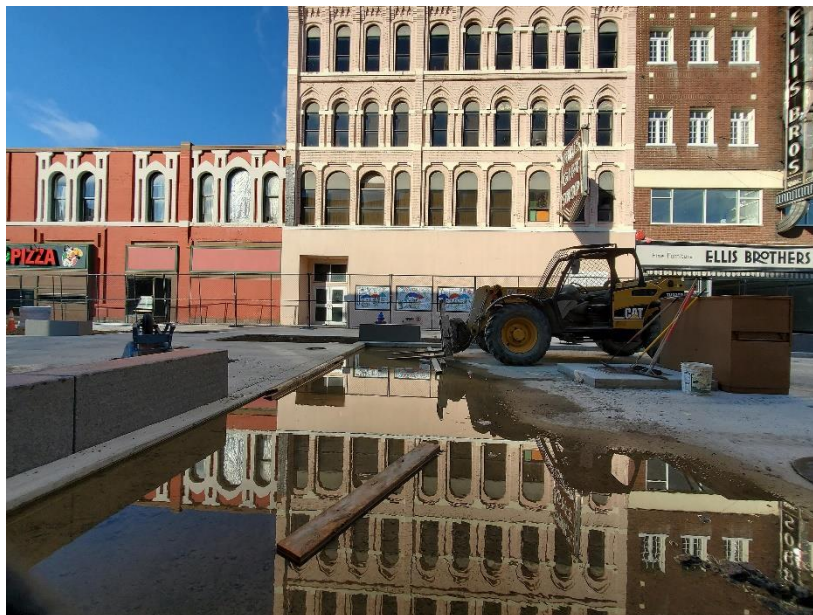
“It’s incumbent on technical people to not let things go until there’s a huge problem,” says Zimbabwe. “Because then it’s much harder to have a rational conversation about it.”



Completion of a downtown Binghamton improvement initiative has been delayed because some of the needed materials have not been delivered.

Mayor Richard David said supply chain issues are affecting work on the redesigned Washington Street pedestrian mall.

Speaking on WNBF Radio's Binghamton Now program on Tuesday, David said "there were a couple of weeks of inactivity because of we're still waiting for the light posts" to arrive.



A pool of water at the Washington Street pedestrian mall project on November 3, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

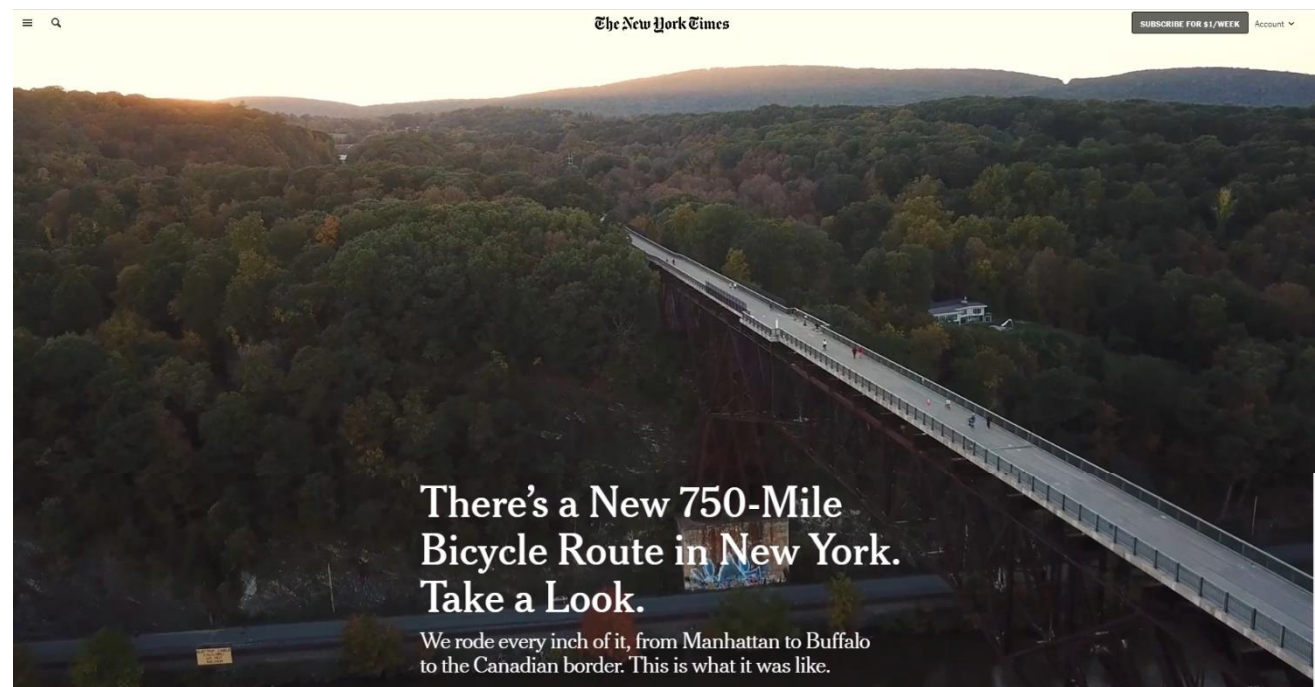
The mayor indicated he expected the poles will be delivered by the end of the month.

Although operations at the site of the \$636,000 project on the south side of the MetroCenter had been suspended, workers were back on the job Thursday to install specially-designed pavers which had just arrived.

Workers installing pavers on the Washington Street pedestrian mall on November 4, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

One worker told WNBF News that some of the lighting elements planned for the pedestrian mall now are now expected to be delivered until February.

City officials initially hoped the reconstruction project would have been completed by October.



By Jane Margolies and Wm. Ferguson
Photographs and Video by Johnny Milano

November 5, 2021

Last December, the [Empire State Trail](#) — a sprawling, 750-mile cyclist and pedestrian route that connects Buffalo to Albany and New York City to the Canadian border, forming what looks like a sideways T — opened to the public. Considering the pandemic bike boom, the timing was perfect.

About 400 miles of greenways, repurposed rail lines and bike paths already existed in New York. So, when the \$200 million project was announced in 2017, the state rushed to fill in the gaps between them.

Where new bike trails were not possible, blue-and-yellow signs were installed on roads signaling the way, and some guardrails were added to protect cyclists from vehicular traffic.

The result — a combination of protected paths, city streets, highway shoulders and country roads that pass by small towns and cities — offers views of wetlands, waterways, grasslands and mountain ranges. It is a showcase for New York State's history and natural beauty.

Recently, two reporters set out on bikes to experience the trail for themselves. One traveled from Buffalo to Albany, and the other, from New York City to the Canadian border.

Here are the highlights.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/05/nyregion/ny-empire-trail.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap>

Troopers: Man struck by 2 vehicles, killed on Route 17C in town of Union

Neal Simon

Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin

Published 4:05 p.m. ET Nov. 8, 2021 / Updated 6:17 a.m. ET Nov. 9, 2021

A pedestrian was killed Saturday night after being struck by two vehicles while walking on state Route 17C in the Broome County town of Union.

Endwell-based New York State Police said Wesley H. Conklin, 38, entered the roadway and was hit by a pair of vehicles near Exit 69 on the George F. Highway at about 10:25 p.m.

Conklin, who troopers said was homeless, was pronounced dead at the scene.

The New York State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Collision Reconstruction Unit, along with the Union Volunteer Emergency Squad, the Johnson City Fire Department and the Broome County Sheriff's Office assisted at the scene.

State Police said no criminal charges are being filed at this time.



More details are coming out on just where money from the bi-partisan Infrastructure Deal will be channeled locally.

Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News (file)

U.S. Senator Charles Schumer of New York on November 9 announced \$27,339,077 is headed to Broome County for the B.C. Transit bus service. The Democrat says the bill invests in modernizing public transit over the next five years.

The Senate Majority Leader says the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will provide \$11-billion over the next five years for transit agencies across New York State. That would be the largest federal investment in public transportation on record.



For areas outside of New York City, the Democrat says \$156-million will head to Buffalo, over \$105-million to the Albany-Schenectady area and over \$55-million to Syracuse. \$17,813,002 is going to TCAT in Ithaca.

Schumer says five billion dollars of the package is focused on replacing deficient transit vehicles, including buses, with clean, zero-emission vehicles.