

Protected Bike Lanes Are Safer for Drivers, Too

www.Citylab.com By Laura Bliss June 3, 2019

A comprehensive study of crash and street design data from 12 cities finds that roads with protected bike lanes make both cycling and driving safer.

If you encounter a Baltimore bicyclist who seems a little on edge of late, forgive her. On top of the usual risks posed by cycling in a city whose [drivers have been convincingly ranked as the very worst in the United States](#), riders there are dealing with a special new psychological trauma: The city [keeps ripping out](#) protected bike lanes it only recently installed.

Why? To reclaim the streets for parking, of course, after complaints from car-using residents. Or, [in the words of a city spokesperson](#) upon the removal of a neighborhood cycle track in April: “We are looking to build bicycle tracks or infrastructure that works, not just for the bicyclist or the community, but everyone. That’s our main goal.”

Unmentioned in [Baltimore’s latest bikelash](#) is something that might conceivably make drivers more supportive of protected bike lanes: Protected lanes for cyclists make them safer, too. That’s according to a comprehensive new study published in the *Journal of Transport and Health*. Researchers at the University of Colorado, Denver and the University of New Mexico found that protected and separated bike lanes are strongly linked to lower fatality and injury rates not only for people on bikes, but for people in cars.

“If you’re going out of your way to make your city safe for a broader range of cyclists ... we’re finding that it ends up being a safer city for everyone,” Wesley Marshall, a University of Colorado Denver engineering professor and a co-author of the paper, told [Streetsblog](#).

Marshall and his co-authors analyzed 13 years of crash and street design data from 12 large U.S. cities to understand what makes some more deadly than others. They tested three hypotheses. Is it “safety in numbers”—that is, do larger shares of bike riders make drivers more careful around bikes? Or do differences in a city’s socioeconomic and demographic composition—for example, fewer children and elderly folks, or more affluent residents—lower the risk of fatalities? Or, lastly, is it all about the built environment—do street design elements such as lots of intersections and protected bike lanes slow down drivers and keep crashes from happening?

The authors amassed a huge data set: 17,000 fatalities and 77,000 severe injuries between 2000 and 2012 in Minneapolis, Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, Portland, Dallas, Houston, Austin, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Memphis, and Chicago. All these cities have experienced a rise in cycling’s popularity, have added bike amenities at various levels of investment, and have seen a range of safety outcomes over the years. (Due to a lack of available data, some cities that might have been included, such as Baltimore, were not.) They then tested those outcomes against features like census data and street design elements.

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The authors found that “safety in numbers” had very little statistical link to fatality rates; indeed, higher shares of cyclists were actually associated with worse rates of severe injuries. So strike that theory. But socioeconomic and demographic differences did seem to play a role. Where there are more white and affluent residents, there was less death and critical harm resulting from collisions—consistent with the body of research that suggests that [people of color are more vulnerable to road violence for a host of reasons](#).

But the most important safety factor was right on the pavement. Separate and protected bikes lanes were the strongest indicator of lower fatality and injury rates. Where cycle tracks were most abundant on a citywide basis, fatal crash rates dropped by 44 percent compared to the average city, and injury rates were halved. While cyclists benefited from having painted bike lanes as well as fully separated bike lanes in terms of safety, what paid off the most for all road users—drivers included—were protected lanes fortified with stanchions, planters, and the like.

To repeat: Though the study doesn't try to explain why, this is evidence that protected cycle tracks lower traffic safety risks for drivers, too. And by the way, those shared-lane markings, also known as "sharrows," were just as useless as ever. Marshall's previous research suggests they might even do harm: "You're better off doing nothing," he told *Streetsblog*. "It gives people a false sense of security that's a bike lane."

One might think such research should help inform the aggrieved bikelash debates happening in Baltimore [and most certainly beyond](#). While separated lanes might mean sacrificing some parking for motorists, Marshall's new study suggests that they're gaining something far more important: percent points on their chances of survival to drive another day.

Alas, the short-term win of a curbside spot seems to be of utmost importance in the minds of many vocal residents in communities around the country. "Where does it stop?" asked [Liz Cornish, head of the local advocacy group Bikemore](#), after portions of [another protected lane was removed in early May](#). "If we keep conceding that parking is more important than the safety of people of people using bikes and motorized wheel chairs, that's an issue." And if parking turns out to be more important to drivers than their own safety? That's a bike lane debate that no one is winning.

Estimated cost for failed Durham-Orange light rail line nears \$159M

WRAL.com By Tyler Dukes, WRAL investigative reporter, & Sarah Krueger, WRAL reporter May 28, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — Although it was abandoned earlier this year, months before construction was even scheduled to begin, the now defunct Durham-Orange Light Rail project is expected to cost North Carolina taxpayers more than \$158 million before it's officially closed out in 2020.

GoTriangle's Board of Trustees stopped work on the project at the end of March after the transit organization failed to secure land donations, private funding and cooperative agreements from key partners, including Duke University, ahead of a legislative deadline.

As of March 31, GoTriangle had already paid out about \$130 million on planning, engineering design and other costs since 2014. But in an April 29 memo to county leaders in Durham and Orange counties, obtained via records request by WRAL News, transit officials said the costs are expected to top \$153 million through the end of June, with an additional \$5 million estimated during the 2020 fiscal year.

The majority of that updated figure – about \$20 million – will pay for previously unbilled work performed in the early part of 2019, just before the project folded.

The remainder will largely pay for staff, consultants and real estate expenses as the project winds down.

John Tallmadge, the interim director of the Durham-Orange Light Rail project, said the spending was reasonable given the phase of the project. Without it, he said, there was no way to secure a \$1.2 billion federal grant that would have funded nearly half the light rail line.

"We were very close to construction, and on a \$2.5 billion project, you've got to spend this kind of money in order to get to where we were in the process," Tallmadge said.

Some of the money spent upfront could have been reimbursed through the federal grant transit officials hoped to have in place by November, Tallmadge added, but the end of the project means that's no longer an option.

"That's unfortunately the way it works, and that's why it was a big loss to our community," Wendy Jacobs, chair of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, said.

GoTriangle expects to be largely done paying consultants for the project by the end of June 2019, a cost that totals about \$1.3 million for general engineering, project and construction management .

But legal expenses and compensation related to real estate acquisitions are expected to stretch into the 2020 fiscal year. That includes costs associated with five active lawsuits the transit organization is still fighting in court.

"These additional amounts of land-owner compensation and litigation expenses are not known at this time and cannot be predicted with certainty," the GoTriangle memo says.

But the largest remaining costs noted in the memo are tied to the staff once dedicated to the light rail project. Through June 2020, GoTriangle estimates the department will pay out more than \$2.5 million as they consider how to restructure.

Some of those staff members, Tallmadge said, will be shifted to work on other transit projects in the area, all of which will be funded by a half-cent sales tax approved by voters.

"We wanted to be thoughtful about what staffing would be needed for work that would be going forward in the future for Durham and Orange counties, or that is ramping up on the Wake County side," Tallmadge said.

Costs also include rent in GoTriangle's Durham office, located on the 10th floor of the N.C. Mutual Life building downtown – an additional \$475,000 through June 2020. The GoTriangle Board of Trustees must decide whether to break its five-year lease in the space early, potentially incurring additional costs.

As for what the taxpayers will ultimately gain for nearly \$160 million in spending on the project, Tallmadge said "it's a difficult question." The light rail project, he said, was backed both by voters and elected officials, who determined it was critical infrastructure for the area.

He said the resources spent planning, designing and preparing to move forward on the project gave it the best chance to succeed.

"Unfortunately," Tallmadge said, "we ended up where we are, and there was no other way to get to this point in time to potentially succeed without spending that money."

Jacobs called the loss of the public investment in the light rail project "upsetting." But looking ahead, she said local leaders are working on a new Durham County transit plan formed by "a very collaborative, community-based process."

"It's going to be a very different approach," Jacobs said. "We're going to make sure we get a lot of input from the community about exactly what that looks like."

First 'Build NC' transportation bonds cleared for market

WRAL.com By Travis Fain, WRAL statehouse reporter May 23, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — A planned \$3 billion in state transportation spending moved forward Thursday with a key vote to issue an initial round of bonds to finance construction.

The Council of State, a group that includes the governor and other statewide elected officials, approved the first \$300 million of borrowing. There are nearly 40 highway projects on the construction list for this first round.

The long-term plan is to do up to \$300 million a year, for 10 years, to finance transportation projects around the state.

This "Build NC" bond package cleared the General Assembly last year, but there are a lot of logistics before the state actually borrows the money, including Thursday's vote.

State Treasurer Dale Folwell raised concerns before the vote that led to questions from other council members, including State Auditor Beth Wood. The state initially failed to disclose some information to bond rating agencies and others as it rushed to meet a deadline looming at the June 30 end of the fiscal year.

Secretary of Transportation Jim Trogdon said this was the first bond issue his department had worked on under a new process and that the information was disclosed as soon as officials realized it needed to be. He and other state officials, including Gov. Roy Cooper's budget director, then vouched for package.

"We would not be bringing this to you if we were not 110 percent confident," State Budget Director Charlie Perusse said.

After some back and forth, Wood said her concerns were satisfied.

"I'm very comfortable with moving forward," she said.

In the end, the vote to move forward was unanimous. Perusse said he expects the state to get an excellent interest rate on the bonds.

Three airlines will get new homes at Raleigh-Durham International Airport next spring

The Herald-Sun By Richard Stradling

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MORRISVILLE – People who fly Allegiant, Frontier or Spirit airlines in and out of Raleigh-Durham International Airport will use a different terminal starting next spring.

The three budget airlines will join Southwest in Terminal 1 on the east side of RDU's campus by April 1, 2020.

Spirit became the 11th airline to fly from RDU when it added eight daily nonstops to seven cities earlier this month.

The move will free up space in Terminal 2, the airport's largest and busiest with 36 gates. It will coincide with the activation of four dormant gates in Terminal 1, bringing the total there to 9.

Between now and next spring, RDU will build a new baggage handling system at Terminal 1 as well as install new ticket counters and kiosks, flight monitors and furniture. It's not clear yet whether the terminal's security checkpoint will be expanded or a second one will be built, said airport spokeswoman Stephanie Hawco.

Two of the new gates will have traditional jet bridges found throughout the airport, while two will be configured to allow passengers to walk outside, where rolling stairs or ramps would lead to the plane's front and rear doors.

Frontier Airlines, which now flies nonstop to 32 cities from RDU, asked the airport to accommodate ground-level, dual-door boarding for its planes to reduce the amount of time it takes to get passengers on and off.

A new restaurant will also open in Terminal 1 just as the airlines begin using the new gates. The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority approved a contract Thursday for Raleigh Brewing Tavern, which will feature beers from Raleigh Brewing Co. The restaurant will also serve Port City Java coffee and both sit-down and carry-out meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The tavern will be operated by Uptown Airport Group, the company that has run the Char-Grill and Salsarita's Fresh Cantina in Terminal 1 since 2014.

The expansion of Terminal 1 is needed because Terminal 2 is essentially full, with none of its 32 gates available to lease, according to Bill Sandifer, the airport's chief operating officer. This winter, Sandifer told the airport authority that moving Frontier would free up two gates in Terminal 2, while moving Spirit would free up one. Allegiant doesn't have an assigned gate, but moving to Terminal 1 will mean other carriers won't have to share with the airline.

A record 6.4 million passengers flew out of RDU last year, and traffic continues to grow as airlines add flights. Nearly 572,000 passengers boarded flights in April, a 6.2 percent increase compared to the same month last year, airport president Michael Landguth said Thursday. Airlines have since added 16 flights to the schedule, including a new daily nonstop to Phoenix from American Airlines.