

## Audio file

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### Transcript

#### Speaker 1

It's time for the outspoken cyclist your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at [outspokencyclists.com](https://outspokencyclists.com) or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host, Diane Jenks.

#### Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for tuning in today. As many of you know, I have an abiding interest in urban planning, walkable and bikeable cities and sustainability, and in furthering that interest, I love speaking with folks who are involved in any or all of these areas, and today is no exception. My guests are Jeff Speck and Chris Demps. In the past, Jeff and I have had several powerful conversations about the work he does in assisting cities, towns and municipalities become walkable and bikeable, his books, walkable cities, and walkable cities. Rules are nothing short of step by step instructions on how to achieve these goals. Joined now by Chris Dempsey and a just announced new partnership, the impact of their ideas, coupled with their backgrounds will serve to transform communities nationwide, maybe even worldwide. Let me introduce you to Chris Dempsey and welcome back Jeff Speck. Jeff and Chris, welcome to the outspoken cyclist. Thanks for joining me today. We have.

#### Speaker 3

Our pleasure.

#### Speaker 2

Well, it's always good to speak with you, Jeff. I. We've had several conversations about the work you do and what's interesting about. Your urban planning ideas is that there's somewhat unconventional, and then they end up being really inspired and successful. So the last time we spoke, we were discussing walkable cities, companion book, walkable cities rules, which is up on my bookshelf. Apparently we also had a pre interview discussion where you asked me questions which was just like another Jeff Speck moment. I I don't even remember that, but I looked back on. On our conversation in my website and found that. I want to introduce your new associate, though I'm excited to learn what the two of you have planned and to learn more about him. Chris Dempsey, welcome to the outspoken cyclist. Introduce yourself and tell us about you.

#### Speaker 3

He's my new partner, not just associate.

Speaker 2

Ohh excuse me Jeff and Chris. Yes it is. It's spec Dempsey. And by the way, your logo's really nice. I like it a lot.

Speaker 4

We love the logo. The logo incorporates the crosswalk theme, which of course has been important in Jeff's career and his in his books, but more broadly represents what we're trying to do for cities around the country and around the world. So Diane, it's great to be on with you today. I'm Chris Dempsey and proud to be a partner in Spec Dempsey and I've spent my career at the intersection of transportation, mobility, politics and government, having served as Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Governor Deval Patrick here in Massachusetts and worked in an advocacy role as the leader of transportation. From Massachusetts, the largest pro transportation and Sustainable transportation coalition here. And then also been very involved in politics over the years, including a couple of runs myself. So like to bring that that perspective of political pragmatism to the work that we do, but sustainable transportation is deeply embedded in my story. I grew up with the MBTA's Green Line going through my backyard. I could see it out of my bedroom. And my dad was a commuting cyclist back in the 70s and 80s before it was cool, and I'm now 41 years old and have never owned a car in my life, so very committed to walking, biking and taking transit.

Speaker 2

My son-in-law doesn't drive and he's 51 now, or 52 now. Yeah, he he was born and raised in Canada and in Toronto area. Never driven a car. So my daughter slaps them around. Cleveland does not have the mass transit that Boston has, which would be very nice if we did. We have a very limited. Mass transit system rail system.

Speaker 3

Yeah, you have a pretty attractive BRT that runs from downtown to the hospitals and the university. I remember, right.

Speaker 2

Yeah. It it? Yeah. And and then W it goes to the airport, but it it's not broad, it doesn't. So Cleveland is this East West divided city by the Cuyahoga River? And then. Out of Terminal Tower, which is downtown, you've got 2 lines. I think it's a green line and a blue line and they will take you east. And they'll take you further than University Circle, which? Is the. The heart of sort of employment here and and social and institutions like the Cleveland Institute of Art and Case Western Reserve University, but. It's limited in terms of its north-south, so there are a lot of ways it needs to be expanded. Am I not so humble opinion?

Speaker 4

Diane, let me just say to to your point. You know, I consider it a great privilege that I've been able to lead a healthy and productive life without having owned a vehicle, but it shouldn't be a privilege for Americans. It should be a right. It should be something that is more easily accessible to anybody, and that's what spec Dempsey is all about is making places that are more walkable and transit oriented and bikeable, so that people have more options and. Ultimately have more freedom to do what they want to do.

Speaker 2

So I have. A question about what you think in terms of mobility because it says it you say that you are a mobility expert. What does that mean exactly?

Speaker 4

Well, I've I've spent my career on transportation policy, so when I worked for Governor Patrick, we were trying to develop and implement policies that improved transit, that made our Community downtown stronger and more walkable, that tried to push back on the national and state. Guide that is really a Pro automobile pro driving culture and to unveil all of the hidden subsidies for driving that are really endemic throughout our political system and our tax system. System and it's not that I'm that I'm anti car. Look, I've driven cross country twice. I I love driving on an open Rd. but our.

Speaker 3

I let I let Chris drive me. He actually knows how. To drive.

Speaker 2

OK, that's good. Good. He has a license, I hope. Yep. Yep. That's all good.

Speaker 3

He he drove an electric Mustang around Texas, and he did just fine.

Speaker 2

I think that's an oxymoron. An electric Mustang. My husband and I've had that conversation. It's like, come on. It's a sports car anyway. Go ahead.

Speaker 3

The new thing?

Speaker 4

But, but you know, you look at, for example, the federal gas tax, which we have not raised since 1993.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 4

OK, so the message that we are sending to drivers is not only that we're trying to keep their costs low, but that we really don't want them to pay for their roads at all. And we're going to find other ways to do that. And then we sort of scratch our heads and wonder why we have such an increase in vehicle miles travel then why people are choosing to live further away from from where they work. We have so many. Billions of dollars of hidden subsidies for that system. And so a lot of my work has been to try to expose that and to work on the inside while also again improving the lives for transit riders. So I'll just share this one more anecdote, which is when I was working for Governor Patrick back in 2009, 2010, we made the MBTA the first transit agency on the East Coast to share its real time. Data with the public and third parties and that made possible the applications that you now have on your smartphone that tell you when your bus or. Your train will arrive, which was an absolute revolution for transit, especially for bus riders like me. Who used to just sit at a bus stop in the rain or the snow, wondering where their bus was, and now have that information in the palm of their hands. It's been a dramatic transformation and I was really proud to Co found the program that made that happen way back in 2009.

Speaker 2

Let me reintroduce you to and then I have a a question about something that goes to the federal side. We're speaking with Jeff Spec and Chris Dempsey spec. Dempsey it's a new partnership. We've spoken with Jeff in the past several times actually, he wrote walkable cities and walkable cities rules and a whole bunch of other stuff. They work on great. Projects we will give you a way to follow what the. We're doing as we closeout the conversation a little bit later on so, and neither of you can answer this question or address the what I'm gonna talk about and that is Pete Buttigieg and the infrastructure bill and how that may or may not be impacting and or affecting what you're doing. Is it helping?

Speaker 3

I think it is helping. I made a bit of an enemy of of the mayor, although I I doubt he remembers that me for it because I wrote an article that appeared in in the hill about the time that they launched that. What is it, \$5 billion crisis program to help communities pay for safety improvements to infrastructure. That's a really important program to answer your question as I tell my story, a lot of cities that we work with are excited to use that funding to pay for the sort of projects that we recommend and design in their communities. So the impacts are real and they're widespread. It's a huge amount of money. In fact, they're having trouble spending it, and I would encourage municipal leaders who are listening to apply for those. Yes, I wrote an article in the Hill that talked about how for every Rd. that that funding makes safer, there's a couple of dozen new roads being built in the US which are incredibly dangerous because the real problem is

our standards, right, the the opposite of a vision zero approach that American engineers take to. Designing our streets so my my target wasn't Pete Buttigieg, but, but I just wanted to point out. You know, they're starting a we're we're starting 100 fires in this country every day as we put a couple out in terms of the safety challenges and that's a nice way of putting it that typical American St. engineering gives us.

Speaker 2

Which takes me to the next thing we were going to talk about. So I spoke with a young man named John Sirico, who writes A blog for street sub stack called St. Beat. He's a professor of journalism, but his. Direction is sustainability in cities and all. And Hoboken, NJ, apparently has had zero fatalities in seven years. Zero. Then right across the river, of course. New York City recorded a record 43 cycling deaths last year and under even though pedestrian deaths went down a little bit, it they were still outrageous. So. You're talking about safety and what's important to building safety into projects. What kinds of things are you recommending to cities that? You know, sort of fly in the face of what they've always done and are the new urban planners beginning to look at that stuff? I know you are one of these people, Jeff, who just has your own vision and it works it. It's clear that it works.

Speaker 3

Oh, what's been wonderful over 30 years is watching this vision, which I, which I've learned slowly and in fact, I was late to understanding bicycles properly. But I think I understand urban cycling now. But what what's been wonderful to see over 30 years is more and more city leadership and city staff actually leading the charge to make these sort of changes. So Hoboken is one example and even more shining, perhaps not statistically, but I I think I think it's just as good statistically as Jersey City, which is next door to Hoboken which is just done. Done. Tactical intervention after tactical intervention. Both bicycle facilities and crosswalk and other pedestrian facilities that have precipitously dropped their traffic injury rate and by the way, it's not really fair to compare Hoboken to New York. I think you need to look at, you need to look at per capita numbers, but but there are plenty of there. There are thousands of Americans. Cities that have achieved vision 0 because they might have a population of, you know, 100. But but but but more, but more to more to the point.

Speaker 2

Yeah, not a fair comparison, I agree.

Speaker 3

It's been brilliant to see a public servants, you know, directors of public works like Donoho Chen in Seattle who's tweeting every couple days about a signal that he replaced with a stop sign, which statistically reduces crashes by 67%. For example, right. Or I should say, serious. Pedestrian injury crashes by 67%, according to a study of 200 such interventions in Philadelphia. So there's all these little things that we've

learned. Like removing a center line from a two way St. causes people to drive 7 miles an hour slower. We've learned that it's been amazing to me with the lives that information like that could save. How slow that has disseminated the country, but it's great to see certain cities have really picked it up and more and more every day. Are picking it up and.

Speaker 4

Dan, I would just add that. It's it's really important to have comparisons. Of places like Hoboken and Jersey City to New York because so often in these conversations, there's a kind of inherent cynicism that these crashes are due to behavior of pedestrians or cyclists, or they're due to some weather issue or some cultural issue that is at play. But last time I checked, Hoboken, Jersey City and New York City all have. The same weather. They have very similar cultures, they've got similar ages in terms of their their streets and how their cities are laid out and the width of their roadways. And so it it makes clear that. Deaths of pedestrians and cyclists through traffic violence is it and drivers is a choice. It's a political choice that municipal leaders and state leaders are making every single day, and they can choose to be Hoboken or Jersey City, where you've got city councilors like James Solomon in Jersey City, who's been a leader on this issue fighting. To make streets safer and and pushing that change, sometimes through small tactical measures and sometimes through longer term planning, you know or you can sort of sit back and throw up your hands and just say this is this is something we have to accept and nobody should be accepting this anywhere in the.

Speaker 3

But as a former, as a former manhattanite, I would take issue that the culture in New York and Hoboken are. The same.

Speaker 2

Just on principle. So you're not wrong there either. So we did speak with somebody from Jersey City and it was from there. Advocacy organization. So I don't remember his name right off the top of my.

Speaker 3

Well, the woman who runs public works, I believe that's her role in Jersey City, whose name I forget. We were on a podcast together. There. I'm sorry not to have her name on the tip of my tongue. She is incredible. She's done so much there. She's also employed good friends of the good friends of ours at St. plans, a fellow named Michael Aiden, who wrote the book. Tactical urbanism. You may have heard of. And my former colleague and co-author on a book called The Smart Growth Manual. Mike and his team at St. Plans they specialize in quick. Filled full urbanism interventions, and they've done a ton of work in Jersey City. They worked for Bloomberg all over the place. They do our, you know, art in the street, right, crosswalks that make people aware because they're artistic. And what's remarkable about what's remarkable about his firm. And you should

have him on the show. Is that his team actually goes in and builds it. They don't just design it. They don't just do. But they bring the the the materials and they get it built in your.

Speaker 2

Short break and when we return, we'll talk with Jeff and Chris about the concept of daylighting and more. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks, and we are speaking with Jeff Speck and his partner Chris Dempsey about walkable and of course, bikeable cities. So what do you think of daylighting? I just learned about it?

Speaker 3

I'm I'm worried about. I'm a fan of daylighting, but I feel it's overused. And and this has to do with risk homeostasis risk. Homeostasis is the phenomenon that describes the fact that people adjust their behavior to the level of risk that they're comfortable with. And that's why, for example, when you. When you took the, when you put antilock brakes into the taxi fleet in New York City, it took only a few weeks for them to have just as many crashes as before because they started tailgating and changing the way they they behave. The same thing applies to St. design and the great failure of American St. Design is that highway engineering standards. We're brought into our our inner cities. Without an understanding of the fact that the more elbow room you give a driver, the more visibility you give a driver, the more sense of comfort you give a driver. Which is a good thing to do on a highway, cause the speed limit is set by the speed limit signs. The more you do that, the more you cause speeding in cities.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

When you when you add just a few miles an hour to the speed of a driver in a in a city, you double the chance of the pedestrian getting killed, right? So this is the key factor in most crashes in cities. How does that apply to daylighting? Well, you definitely want to pull the cars back, for example, parked cars near a crosswalk. I want to pull them back at, I'd say about 10. 2 feet from the crosswalk so you don't have pedestrians dodging out between cars or hidden from cars as they approach the crosswalk. But what I've seen in a number of cities is an overuse of daylighting, where there's no parking anywhere near any intersection. Any driveway you know, any curb cut, they daylight it, for example. They do this in Tulsa. They daylight at 20 feet on either side. What you end up with is basically no cars parked on the street, and then you have 40 feet of pavement for A2 lane Rd. instead of 20 feet of pavement for A2 lane Rd. And everyone's speeds so daylighting is important, but it should not be overused to the degree that it gives drivers too much. Little room.

Speaker 2

Very interesting.

Speaker 3

Think about your behavior as a driver. As you approach a corner. There are a lot of sight triangle rules. In the codes that don't allow you to pull buildings up to corners, for example. Alan Jacobs in his book *The Boulevard Book*, he demonstrated how some of the greatest boulevards in the world would lose half their trees. If these sight triangle rules were applied. And that when you're driving and you come up to a corner, if you can see around that corner, you'll probably speed around that corner. Whereas if there's buildings and trees and other things tied to it, you'll behave in a more cautious way. So we have to be very careful about risk homeostasis when we make rules to improve the visibility of pedestrians, which is, of course, is also important.

Speaker 2

I remember what I was gonna ask you, and it's about the new urban planners that are coming up out of college university. Are they beginning to adopt A different perspective from what has always been, or are we still seeing the same kind of thinking? That the engineers. So I know that Chuck Marone decided to just give up his engineering license he got in so much trouble with the engineers out in wherever he is, Minnesota or whatever.

Speaker 3

We spoke to him yesterday. He he, he. He says he's still an engineer, but he's officially a retired engineer.

Speaker 2

Ohh OK, that's right. That's right. It was something. Yes, he wrote a book, *Confessions of a retired engineer* or something like that, right of a recovering engineer. Right. Right, right.

Speaker 3

Recovering confessions of. And fantastic books.

Speaker 2

Right. Yeah, we. We we had that conversation. So what about the new crop of urban planners and design people and people like Chris and you?

Speaker 4

Well, Jeff has a through through the great merit of his his tenure in this world a a broader and longer view of I think change over time. I will say that.

Speaker 3

Is that what you call being old my I've. Had 10 years since 1963.

Speaker 4

I think I've been fortunate to mostly work in a world since the early 2000s, where I've been surrounded by people that understand the need for change, and I feel very fortunate that's the case. Now, I've also spent a lot of my work in Massachusetts and Greater Boston, where I think we do have a culture that elevates and upholds the importance of walking, biking, and taking transit. And so that's not necessarily applicable around the entire country, but it's been very encouraging to see, no matter where we do go in the country. A willingness of people to embrace walkability, in particular as kind of the core unit of mobility that they want to see in their downtowns and in their new neighborhoods. And that's part of what makes this opportunity that we have with Spec Dempsey so excited. The phone is ringing off the hook at our headquarters at Jeff's desk, here in his apartment with calls from people around the country and around the world who have read Jeff's books, who have seen him speak or seen his Ted talks, and who understand that that vision of. A walkable place is gonna create the economic vibrancy. It's gonna create the equity gonna create the diversity. It's gonna create economic opportunity for people that their cities might not have today because of poor design in the past, but which can be fixed and at least or at least improved maybe more easily than some people might think. But we're working on a project in suburban Dallas right now, and it's a it's a great. Poor historic downtown, but essentially it's been handed over. To five lane roads at its historic downtown. We're gonna pull that back, make it a much more human scaled place. And the instant we do that, I have no doubt that it is going to become a more economically vibrant place. And that's in suburban Dallas, in a region that you might think wouldn't be interested in. That would only be interested in making it easier to drive pickup trucks. That's not the case. And so if we can do it in suburban Dallas, we. Can do it anywhere in the country.

Speaker 3

And I should say that you know also as a Massachusetts born and bred person that. I've had more. I wouldn't say I've had more success, but I've done more work actually in red States and red cities than I have in blue in blue ones. And it's because of the desire for economic development. So you know, downtown Oklahoma City was dead. And we rebuilt all the streets and it came back. To life. Carmel IN you know, I don't think it's ever had a mayor. At least not since, you know, reconstruction. That wasn't Republican. And Mayor Brainard, who just retired after 28 years of leading change in Carmel. IN they have 150 roundabouts. Not exactly my favorite design approach, but calming traffic in a suburban place. There are a really great tool. And then we were able to redesign a or actually create a brand new. Hard through the middle of the community that is now has now created a a full half mile of walkability like a full urban in the best sense mile of of downtown in what was pretty much a driving town.

Speaker 2

So let me ask a question about how the pandemic may or may not have affected some of your plans and how people who stayed home and then rode bikes. Didn't go to work working from home still or who walk places. How has that impacted the work you're?

Speaker 3

Well, I like Chris to talk about the pandemics, relationship to transit. I would say it had almost no impact. On the work that I'm doing, aside from making some of it slower and, you know, take a little more time to get done, except perhaps that because more people now are working from home, people start to care a little bit more about the.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

Urban, you know, 24/7 quality of what we're prior more like bedroom communities and understanding that this concept of making a mixed-use fully walkable place is not just a you know urban downtown issue it's a it's a it's an issue that can really impact your quality of life. Wherever you happen to be.

Speaker 4

I'd say the pandemic has created great opportunities for urbanism and for more sustainable transportation, and it's also been a great threat to it, and most notably, that threat has been with our transit agencies. Very few of them around the country have bounced back to their pre pandemic ridership. Levels, even the the best ones, are at maybe 70% of their ridership, and that's that's been a huge hit to their budgets. Really, the federal government stepped in during the pandemic when it was so clear that transit was itself an essential service, just like nursing and and healthcare and and groceries, stores were transit was getting the people that work at those places to work, and it was essential. There was actually a bus that went by my house. During the pandemic that goes directly to the Longwood Medical Center, one of the largest and most important medical centers in the country, and it was packed with nurses and people and scrubs every single day of the pandemic. But mostly, the story has been lower ridership, and the federal money is now running out, and transit agencies around the country are facing this fiscal Cliff where they're going to have to either make some significant cutbacks or find ways to get more local, state and federal support. I think transit is as essential as ever. I think it will continue to come back more slowly than we would like, but it will. It will come back and eventually be stronger than ever. But there's more work to do there on the opportunity side. Let's not forget that the pandemic did present an opportunity to rethink our streets and we've seen an increase. For example, an outdoor dining in parking spaces that used to serve maybe one drive or parking one car and now serve 10 or 15 people enjoying an outdoor meal. We saw.

Speaker 3

With much better revenues to the.

Speaker 4

Businesses much more tax revenue revenue for the business, a clear win for communities and the and the the the winning back of public space for the public and not just for for vehicles. We also saw that to some extent with especially in the early days of the pandemic. That desire for people to be outside.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 4

Urban spaces and just the creation of more bike lanes and walking lanes. In some cases, the expansion of sidewalks. I was the chair of the Brookline Transportation Board and our municipality here, and we were actually in the New York Times and I'm sure it was the first time that our tiny little. Civic Board was in the New York Times for what we were doing to expand public space, so we were glad to see that get attended.

Speaker 3

I didn't realize you were. You were responsible, or at least partly responsible for that, so I was. I was called by one of the local news stations and I brought early in the pandemic when Boston hadn't done anything hardly to reform its streets around the very specific challenges that COVID and six foot spacing. And our town of Brookline, I guess thanks to Chris and his colleagues, had totally reformed the Main Street. So the Main Street Beacon St. which you probably heard of, which goes through Coolidge Corner, which just a little chauvinistic statement, has the best independent bookstore in Boston and the best independent theater in Boston happens to be in Brookline, which is a town surrounded by Boston. Beacon St. had four lanes and parking lanes and a train running down the middle. The four lanes became two lanes the the outer lanes became parking lanes and the parking lanes, plus a little more, became expanded. Sidewalks and bikeways, and the reporters from Boston's television program had me and my children, one on a bike and one on a Pogo stick hanging out. On the in the bike and pedestrian lanes, the bouncing lanes or biking lanes, and that was part of the of the. Kind of pressure that then helped, then City Councilor Mayor Wu and others put together a big Boston Council meeting where they dragged the then mayor kicking and screaming into finally having to support similar changes in Boston.

Speaker 2

One of the issues that I see and that I hear is people don't want bike lanes in their neighborhoods. They, you know, they're worried about property values now. We've had the Jeff and I have had this conversation in the past. And and I know that it's not

necessarily true and in fact normally it will add value as opposed to take away value. How do you how do you talk to and who do you talk to to get those things to get that thinking change?

Speaker 3

I have to say it that that the more the voices that concern us more are the ones who are worried that it will add value. In other words, gentrification or displacement?

Speaker 2

Hmm, OK.

Speaker 3

So there there may be, in certain neighborhoods, a fear that bike lanes will reduce property values, which they have never done. In fact, there's. Wonderful collection of statistics, some of it in my book, walkable city, rules about how much more your house is worth if you have a great bike facility next to it, but what some communities and I I witnessed it in communities of color in Houston. Fear is that bike lane is a gentrification tool that will cause their property. Values their taxes, other things to go up in a way that causes them to leave their neighborhood. Now. The statistics around that are very interesting. And I report on this. And and and if you if you have listeners who want to read one thing by me. If you're in the field and you're doing the work either as a professional or a a, a hobbyist or an active citizen, I would direct you to walkable city rules because it's a book of techniques and and, you know pictures and graphs and charts and data that will help you get the work done. But if you really want to learn more about this in a more general. Way a year ago I updated my best known book, walkable City, with 100 new pages that talk about lessons from the pandemic and it's the 10th anniversary edition to make sure you buy that one because Amazon still sells the old one for some reason because they have it right? So they sell it. But in that book I give the data surrounding. Bike lanes. But I also talk about the another report which found statistically with a kind of a transnational study. That bike lanes do not lead to gentrification in neighborhoods, but gentrification neighborhoods does lead to bike lanes. So this study, this very careful study, did not demonstrate A causal effect, which is an important conversation to have in communities when they're worried about this happening.

Speaker 2

Right, right, right.

Speaker 4

I think the other thing that's worth saying, and this may be. Obvious to your listenership, Diane, who I know cares a lot about cycling and. Probably is out there on their own bikes. Often the the stereotype in our broader culture of a cyclist in many places is a

upper middle class or wealthy person who's putting on his spandex and getting on. His it's. The man \$3000.

Speaker 3

The middle-aged male and like growth.

Speaker 2

Boy, 3000 years behind the times.

Speaker 4

3013 thousand whatever the number might be and thinks they're Lance Armstrong or Greg Lamond out there on suburban roadway. And in fact, the data shows that that's not the case at all, that.

Speaker 2

Of course not.

Speaker 4

That many, many cyclists are people who are of lower income, who are just trying to get to their job. They're not doing it in in spandex, they're doing it in their jeans and AT shirt. And because they're getting to a retail job or or a warehouse job.

Speaker 3

38 1/2% of the people who commute to work by bike or school. From the lowest 25% of income earners.

Speaker 4

And so we it's always just worth stating that and bringing that up in conversation because everybody deserves a safe commute to work. And this is the least that we can do to make people's community safe.

Speaker 2

Let's take another short break. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist, and we'll be right back. As promised, we are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm Diane Jenks, and we're speaking with Jeff Speck and Chris Dempsey about cities. So there's one other topic and then I wanna I know that we have a time, a, a hard stop for Chris for something. But one other topic is E bikes and we haven't discussed them and they are either this panacea or this the opposite, you know this horrific thing that's going on. I don't know how E bikes are impacting what your thinking is. For urban transportation, because there are three classes of E bikes, some of them are way fast for bike lanes and should be on the road. Some of them you know, some people are not real steady

on them, they're bringing them in to bike share now. So what about E bikes? Where do they fit into your thinking? When you do some planning.

Speaker 3

Well, I wish that the leadership, particularly on the blue side of the aisle, that otherwise has been quite progressive when it comes to climate, would focus with more, you know, laser like precision on the incredible tool that E bikes are versus electric cars, which have their which are important but nowhere near. Of what we need to do in order to stem climate change and getting someone out of a car and. Onto an E bike. Is, you know, probably 100 times the benefit of getting them into an electric vehicle. You know that different ideas have been floated for nationwide subsidies.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

And state level subsidy. He's, I believe only Colorado. Is that right? Chris had a successful program. But but the the. To the yeah.

Speaker 4

Wide maybe, but there's been lots of municipal and county.

Speaker 2

Yeah. See, I thought Seattle did too.

Speaker 3

Lots of municipal. Yeah, but the the fact is that they're they're they pose some challenges because any new vehicle introduced to our our crowded roadways are going to pose challenges that we can discuss. They're real. But in terms of turning people into cyclists and in terms of lightening our carbon footprint and just making our cities more livable, they are definitely a very powerful tool and they are transforming our some of our.

Speaker 4

Cities, you know, Diane, I talked earlier in this podcast about having never owned a vehicle in my life, and that's in part because I'm comfortable out there. Cycling on on roads. And that's not gonna work for everybody. There's lots of households that need to have a vehicle, but the E bike is is a tool that can allow many households to go from 2 vehicles to 1 vehicle. And and the savings that they those households will experience in the first six months of going down to 1 vehicle will more than pay for the cost of the ebike and everything beyond that is gravy. And so it's a, it can be a household savings tool, an economic development tool, mobility tool, a health tool because people do cycle. Or and they're still getting good workouts, even if there's a battery in. So it is. It's

a wonderful new development in mobility. As Jeff said, there's there's things that we need to make sure we get right as they continue to roll out. But I think we should all be very encouraged. By the trends there.

Speaker 2

So we need to kind of wrap it up. Unfortunately. I mean, I could talk about this all day. It's one of my top three favorite topics. I wanna know what somebody listening to the podcast who is not involved in government necessarily. And maybe not even formally involved in advocacy, Hannon should do to. He get a voice in the conversation about his or her community.

Speaker 3

So I'll I'll go first. So Chris is the governing expert. I'll let him. I'll let him pinch it when I'm done, but the, the, the thing that I've experienced having been doing planning for for you know, 30 years is that there's been a real change in the last at least five years. And it has to do around something we didn't discuss, which is not just changing the the transportation infrastructure in your Community, but getting more housing in our downtowns and our main streets, the, the, the, you know, the. First step of. My 4 steps that constitute the general theory of walkability are, you know, to get to get people to walk. The walk has to be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. And in that useful category, what you need is mixed-use in walkable places. In America, that's principally our downtowns and main streets, and they've lost over the years. The mixed-use, the proper balance of uses. That comes from having people living downtown. So we need to get more people living downtown. Of course, a lot of developers are trying to put more housing in places where people already live, and they're often fought by newbies and people in neighborhoods. Similarly, a lot of developers and doing these projects because they're progressive and they want to see health, healthful outcomes, are advocating for bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure and all the other stuff that we know is great. It used to be you'd show up to these meetings. And there were two people at the meeting, I should say, two types of people at the meeting, each represented by a bunch of people. One was the FOD, the friends, the developer, and they may or may not have had a vested interest, but they were there because they were part of the development team, were friends with the development team, or had some way of benefiting from the development and they would. They would speak in support. Then you had the nibbies. You know who who advocating for their own self-interest, may have been correct in fighting the development? Because if you look locally, a new development can have impacts on existing residents. But of course it's the job of a Planning Commission or City Council to look at the whole city and say what's best for the city as a whole. Nimbys are often when it comes to their own interests. They're often right. But of course, the reason we have government is so that our leaders can make decisions that benefit everyone the most, not just a few people the most right. But you have these two groups in the room, the nimbys and the developers friends. In the last five years, I've seen a third group start to show up and they show up in large numbers

and their citizens who just care. And they care about getting more bike lanes. They care about their streets being safer. They don't want their kids run over. They also want places for their their aging parents to live in the community. They want places for their kids out of college to live in the community. They want their community to be more diverse. They want the community to, to be welcoming to more people. And that is the voice that is winning. In these conversations, you've got kind of an equal fight going on between the Nimbus and the and and the. And the friends of the developer and all of a sudden, these people who care about making the community the best as it can be, show up at the meeting and they turn the tables and that's what citizens can do. It's what citizens are doing. And without going too far, I would recommend my book walkable City as a tool that they can use to advocate more effectively in that direction.

Speaker 4

And you know, obviously I agree with everything that Jeff just said. It's been so encouraging to see the growth of pro housing movements around the country. And I would just add this, I think as people looking for advice get involved with those groups or with Pro Cycling or Pro Transit or pro walking groups that exist in your community, they need more volunteers like you, more engaged citizens to be a part of their efforts. And and they're doing incredible grassroots. Work in your community today, so reach out to them, go to Google. You know, until you find the right organization, join up, join their mailing list, start attending their meetings, send them a contribution if you can. The other thing that I would say that's consistent with that having been myself, an elected official in in local office is it's actually pretty rare that local elected officials hear from constituents on issues. You'd be surprised at how few emails and calls we received. And so just taking the time. To write an e-mail to your elected officials saying that you want change, that you want something better or different, you'd be surprised at the impact that that can. Have and my advice here again is to. To do that with some some coaching and encouragement and teamwork from the local advocacy groups, because they're the folks that are organizing, they're pulling people together, they're thinking through the right message to send. And so your message as an individual is going to be stronger and ultimately those messages together will be stronger than the sum of their parts. Because of that organizing effort, so get engaged, get involved, contact your elected officials, and you'd be surprised at the change that.

Speaker

Give me.

Speaker 2

Wow. Well, this has been a wonderful conversation. It always is with Jeff. But Chris, you're adding a really interesting and flavorful dimension to it. I appreciate you taking time to talk with me. We've been speaking with Jeff Speck, Chris dempseyspecdempsey.com and right. I think that's correct and walkable cities. Walkable cities rules. I'm sure more is going to come out of it if you want to see some of the

projects they're doing, go to their website. There is a short 2 plus some minute interview or a video that was interesting about Hammond IN. I'm interested in knowing what's gonna happen there in the future. I again, I really appreciate you talking with me. Congratulations on your new partnership and I hope we get to speak again.

Speaker 3

Diane, if you call us again, we will speak again.

Speaker 4

It's been a real pleasure, Diane. Thank you. So much.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Jeff Speck and Chris Dempsey for joining me today. As always, Jeff just tells it like it is and I was really pleased to meet his new partner, Chris Dempsey. I know this partnership is going to produce some exciting results and I'm going to be following them. You can also keep tabs on them. And their work at [specdempsey.com](http://specdempsey.com) and on social media. As you may remember, I was going to include my conversation with Dave Simmons, the executive director of Ridge Illinois in this episode, but I should know by now that I fall down that rabbit hole every time I talk with Jeff. And now, with Chris added to the mix, our conversation went a bit longer than I had anticipated. I will definitely get you back to Dave's interview in an upcoming episode of the Show. My thanks to you for listening today. I hope you enjoyed the conversation as much as I did. Remember that you can find show notes, photos, links and a written transcript of the show at [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com). You can follow us on social media at [outspoken cyclist](http://outspokencyclist) and if you subscribe to the podcast. You'll never miss an episode. As we wait out the continuing rain, sleet and snow, I hope you're finding ways to stay in shape for the upcoming riding season. And if you're in a place where it is dry and somewhat warm, I hope you go out for a ride until next time, stay safe and stay well. Bye bye.

Speaker 1

Thanks for joining us today on the outspoken cyclist with Diane Jenks. We welcome your thoughts and contributions on our Facebook page or visit [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com) to leave a comment on any episode. We'll be back next week with new guests, topics, conversations and news in the world of cycling. Subscribe to the show and your favorite podcast app, and you'll never miss an episode. The outspoken cyclist is a copyrighted production of DBL promotions with the assistance of WJC U FM Cleveland, a service of John Carroll University. Thanks again for listening. Ride safely and we'll see you next week.