

Audio file

[wjcu-the_outspoken_cyclist_2026-03-13.mp3](#)

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 outspokencyclist.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. I really love having the chance to talk with my New York City friend and colleague, John Sirico, Professor Sirico, actually. Today, John joins me from his local coffee shop, so you might hear a bit of background chatter at times, but the conversation is, as always, enlightening. And I don't mind a bit of ambient noise. As many of my listeners know, my conversations with John are focused on his work in New York City, where he was born and raised, and where he teaches, writes, and works on a great many projects, including his monthly Substack column, Street Beat. I'm pretty sure John rarely sleeps. As we reported in the past, many cycling and walking projects that were in the works, whether shovel-ready, already in process, or even completed, are being shut down or even torn up. The administration in D.C. thinks bike lanes are ugly and a waste of money. Case in point is the already in place bike lane on Arizona Avenue, which is reduced to painted lines from a separate protected lane, sparking a debate between federal policies and local transportation needs. And on it goes. John and I talk about how congestion pricing has worked so well that using a newly coined term, there is a space dividend, meaning things are opening up with less traffic, pollution, better safety, and the extra space created. So what can we do with that? We begin our conversation with Snowmageddon, the winter storm, and how the new mayor of New York handled it, and how Lyft's much relied upon city bike system was impacted. Hey, John, welcome back to the Outspoken Cyclist. Happy spring. It's always good to talk with you. How are you?

Speaker 3

I'm doing well. Always happy to be here, Diane. Thanks for having me.

Speaker 2

It is always my pleasure. So, opened up Street Beat, and the first thing I saw is a new logo. I love it.

Speaker 3

I've been doing this newsletter now since 2020, and I've always felt that it could be a little bit more colorful. Honestly, you run out of photos you could use in my own archive. And, you know, I used it as an opportunity to bring one of my friends on to do it, which was really nice. And they nailed it exactly.

Speaker 2

It's really cute. And we will give people, of course, a way to subscribe to Street Beat, which they should. It's such a good newsletter and you're always on time with it. I always appreciate that you put so much effort into it. It's excellent. And I, you know, finished reading it yesterday while I was preparing for today. So because I don't like to read it too far before something. Otherwise, I'll forget what I want to talk about. So let's wrap up winter and then we'll move into spring. I know you guys had a ton of snow this year, probably more than you've had in a really long time. We did too, but we're more able to cope with it. So tell me about your poor mayor who ended up with this Armageddon.

Speaker 3

So it's crazy because I've lived in New York City for my entire life, for 35 years, and I've never seen a winter like this at all. And usually there's kind of a joke around every mayor has a snowstorm and has to get through. And there's been times where a snowstorm has really messed up a mayor's agenda and really showed shortcomings of their administration, let's say. Usually it's one snowstorm in like the four or eight years that they have mayoralty, you know, their mayoralty, but you know, the new mayors are Mamdani had. Two, I would count this time in between as another event because it was the longest stretch of sub-zero temperatures that New York has had in recorded history. He's had two or three in the first 60 days, let alone 100 days. And it's interesting because this is a person who... had frankly little city governing experience. Most of their governing experience was up in the state, and it's a totally different, it's legislative, right? Not operational, that experience. So you really need operational experience to run a snowstorm, to handle a snowstorm of this kind of, you know, this historic nature of some of the biggest ones. It was the 9th largest storm 2 weeks ago in cities reported history. And I think while there was some slips the first storm, I think that Zoran's team, as he kind of continues to staff up and get really good people around him that know the city a lot more than he does, which I think is an honest admission of a manager, they were able to make some good responses and adjustments to policies that I think a lot of New Yorkers noticed the second time around.

Speaker 2

That's good. That's good. So one question I didn't put in my notes that I sent you during what you just said, Who has he brought around him in transportation?

Speaker 3

Yeah, so there's been several people. So his deputy mayor is this woman named Julia Kirsten, who is an infrastructure delivery person. So she sits above transportation. That's part of her portfolio. And she is just like an infrastructure whiz. She ran it at the state level, which I think is really important when you're thinking of mega projects. And his new transportation commissioner is a long time very well-known quantity in New York City, this guy named Mike Flynn. Mike worked at Sam Schwartz Engineering, which is a premier engineering firm and architecture firm here. And also he worked at the DOT. He worked at the agency as a young guy many years ago and helped build out their bike lane program. This was like in its infancy, you know, 15 years ago now. And then he left, went private sector for many years, and now he's returning to this agency as this commissioner. I think when he was announced, a lot of the people, like the people who really know the street stuff, truly believe that Mike is someone who knows New York City streets almost as best as you could. So it was a big sigh relief for people who are wondering who's going to be the next kind of leader.

Speaker 2

Do you know what some of his ideas are around biking and walking already? Has he already, does he have an agenda there?

Speaker 3

So I would say the first couple of weeks and And it's worth mentioning it got really hobbled by the snowstorm, right? Because you had like, that's really when you start to do your long-term planning, right? The first 100 days you set out your agenda and then we got hit by this crazy winter. However, what has made very clear, we just got over four years of a mayor who was willing to throw street safety aside, knowing now that we know whether it was a favor that was paid in, interference that was political, a lot of St. safety projects got diluted or shelved entirely. And what Mike and his team has spent the first eight weeks now, nine weeks doing is reviving all those projects and putting them back on track, which I think is extremely important. Before you lay out your vision, I think it's really important to bolster your agency's confidence that, hey, this guy's actually going to listen to us because the morale, the agency from what sources would tell me was really low after four years of having, I mean, imagine working on a project for two or three years for a bike lane or a street safety redesign. And at the last minute, some unknown factor, which you later find out is potentially corruption, ends all the work that you did. It would really demoralize you. So I think he spent the first kind of couple of weeks of his term just, you know, really put all those projects back on track. And these are life-saving projects we're talking about that would really, really make a difference in the communities that they are. So that's been the main thing. We have yet to see the

vision yet, but I think the first couple of weeks has just been like, let's revive all these projects that got completely thrown to the side.

Speaker 2

So it wasn't too long ago that I did an interview with, I think it was somebody from Streets Blog about the corruption of the one, the people who had the sound stages.

Speaker 3

Yes, the thing was my old friend, Kevin Duggan.

Speaker 2

Right, And I have not followed up with that. Has anything happened?

Speaker 3

So first three days, yes. So I'm glad that you mentioned that specific, because when I think of lifesaving, that's the project I think of. These are the specific that, a beloved public school teacher died on, an older resident died on, and this is just the last couple of years. It's a really, really intense stroke, let's call it, that goes through a residential neighborhood. First 3, I think the third day of Mamdani's term, he announced that the project is back on. in its full original form, which was nothing particularly revolutionary. It was the plan they always wanted to do. He just got out of his own agency's way, which I think is a good mayor should get out of its own agencies and experts' way, right, and let them do the thing that they know best. And he signaled that the project is moving forward, and he had a big announcement there.

Speaker 2

So what about the trial for the woman who worked for Adams and for just the couple who paid her money and gave her this opportunity on some show to derail these things?

Speaker 3

So that trial is moving forward. Oh, it is, okay. Has not been, you know, definitely, you know, she faces those charges of taking quid pro quo money to sideline these projects. But it was happening across the city. It wasn't just this one project. We found out later. It was all these other projects that if you had a connection to City Hall and you made enough fuss and you had enough money, your dollar spoke louder than the advocacy. And it's been good to see. I think this is largely been an exercise in restoring faith in the city government, right? That like pretty much in every press conference that Mamdani has had so far, he's mentioned we want to return a government that people don't think is just delivering on the, to the benefit of wealthy benefactors, basically, who all these people were, they were really wealthy donors of the mayor. So that's what we've seen so far. I think what advocates are eager to hear is, okay, what's next? What, how do we go beyond that and really think about the future streets of New York City?

Speaker 2

Let me take a moment to reintroduce you, and then I want to talk to you about something some of my friends slash students actually have been talking about. They live in Washington, D.C., and that is the bike lanes. We're speaking with John Sirico. We talk to him several times a year to find out what's going on in New York City, because we know that if it's happening in New York, it might actually show up in Northeast Ohio and other places in the country somewhere down the road. You're sort of like this proving ground for a lot of interesting projects. And you want to subscribe to his newsletter, Street Beat, if you want the ear to the ground information about safety and urban planning and the kinds of things that we talk about on the show all the time. We'll give you more information about that toward the end of our conversation. So I do have friends who have been saying to me, bike lanes are actually being torn up in D.C., that bike lanes that have been there, that were paid for, that were operational, they don't like the way they look. They're ugly. And we know where that's coming from. It's coming from the top of the administration. What's going on in New York? Are you, because for a long time, I think it was Sadiq Khan was expanding all these bike lanes and you were getting all this new infrastructure. Are you still seeing options going forward instead of shrinking, I hope.

Speaker 3

It's a great question, and I think it's getting underreported right now, frankly. So I would say anything that is being tied to federal approval is being tied up right now. So there's a huge proposal to put a busway, which would be buses, cabs, and trucks only on 34th Street, probably the most famous St. in Midtown Manhattan, that goes through where the Thanksgiving Day Parade goes, because it's so congested in the buses, you can walk faster than the buses. It's a joke. Because that requires federal approval, because it kind of connects interstates, like it's a major artery, the federal government has signaled that they're not going to give approval for it, and the project is currently on pause. Also, I will just mention that we got tons of St. safety dollars and infrastructure dollars from Secretary Pete Buttigieg when he was at dot to do these really amazing, I mean, like redesign huge corridors, really big capital projects that would, again, save lives. And most of those projects are now on, are also on pause. The city is now trying to figure out whether it can float the bill, find other ways to fund it, but that's the latest that we're seeing. The last thing I'll just note, sorry, is Congestion pricing has fully died in the courts. The judge has said the Trump administration cannot interfere with it. So there has been a victory for livable streets advocates with congestion pricing, which maybe we'll be telling of these other things.

Speaker 2

And I was going to get to congestion pricing. I knew it was operational and that it's making money and that it's doing what it's supposed to do, slowing traffic and making

things better in Manhattan. With the projects that are stalled because of federal money, anything going on in Albany?

Speaker 3

So that's a big talk right now. You know, this happened the first Trump administration, the first term where the Trump administration withdrew so much and cities and states really have to figure out how to pick up the bill and move action along. We saw that with rejection pricing is a great example. It was something that was passed during the first Trump term, largely because they saw the federal transit dollars dry up and they had to figure out a way to locally raise a lot of revenue. There's a lot of big talks right now about what that can happen between the city and state. The mayor is in a larger kind of push right now to get a lot of funding from Albany for tons of projects, not just this, primarily for his pitch to do free buses in New York City, which is transportation related. Right now, those talks are ongoing. We will see what happens. It's the big kind of, I would say the biggest story between the mayor and governor right now. And there's a transportation team to it because of the buses. But right now, with bike lanes a little bit less or so, the state expects the city to fund a lot of that, if not get stuff from Washington. So we'll see how that kind of shakes out.

Speaker 2

Let's talk about congestion pricing for just a second. Any of those funds coming back to transportation issues like biking and walking.

Speaker 3

Mostly not. So congestion pricing is earmarked entirely for capital upgrades to the subway system. It is MTA, the Metropolitan Transportation of the Verde's money. There's not much cost sharing or revenue sharing with the dot. However, there's a lot. A phrase that gets thrown all around a lot that I've always really liked is the space dividend, which is really now you've cleared up traffic so much. We've seen this happen in a lot of European cities. They do this ambitious thing. We're seeing this in Paris and Amsterdam. With all this new public space that you kind of have, these slower, commerce streets, what can you do to speed up buses, to add bike lanes, to add pedestrian space? And I think that's where the DOTs really come in to figure out, okay, how can we maximize this moment? And frankly, Bamdani's predecessor, Eric Adams, really never cared that much about congestion pricing, always treated it with an arm's length, never really talked about it that much. And that's been the complete tonal shift. Zoran is really supportive of congestion pricing and now really talking about what can we do? 34th Street Busway was really his announcement to really go forward to see what's possible. Now we have so much less traffic and noise and pollution, all these different things.

Speaker 2

Yeah, it's so interesting. People think it's just about collecting the money and opening up traffic, but you're forgetting about pollution. You're forgetting about safety, a lot of things that are really important that are encompassed by the whole congestion pricing thing. Are you seeing or hearing of any other communities outside of Manhattan that are looking at Manhattan for and check in about congestion pricing?

Speaker 3

So this is coming up a lot, especially we have this really, really almost like Boston Big Dig situation here with the BQE, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, which is this old Robert Moses era expressway that is has fallen apart. And there's been talks of expanding the congestion pricing zone. What happens if we were to do that? How could we raise more revenue? Primarily, though, the conversations that have happened have been with other cities. So I'm aware right now that Los Angeles and Boston have reached out to the MTA to ask about congestion pricing, primarily because folks need money and we need sustained revenue, especially as we try to win back the pandemic loss of ridership, attract riders back. This is really the case in places like San Francisco and Los Angeles as they really think about what people want in their city. Can we win back the pandemic loss of ridership and also continue to grow the system and modernize them?

Speaker 2

Let's take a short break. And when we come back, John and I will delve into the ongoing dilemma of e-bikes. and the impact of the higher-powered Class 2 and 3 throttle bikes that frankly aren't really bicycles at all. You're listening to The Outspoken Cyclist. We'll be right back. We are back on The Outspoken Cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. My guest today is Professor John Sirico. We talk with John several times a year to check in on the urban scene in New York City, especially as it pertains to cycling and walking. We're about to delve into the topic of all things e-bikes. So I'm going to take a left turn here. I want to talk about something that is in the news constantly right now. And in fact, I'll be talking with somebody who's a very famous mountain biking guy, Hans Rey. And he has written a piece for bicycle retailer and online about e-motos, meaning bikes that they're calling e-bikes, but they're really not. They're really e-motor, electric motorcycles. What's going on with e-moto and with regulation in New York, if anything?

Speaker 3

Well, I would say this is something that we're seeing some of the most momentum on because it's an area of agreement that I think so many different groups can come around, not only the livable streets folks who know that this is an interference, this could pose a threat now, like speed, noise, so many things. You're also having the kind of left and right come together knowing that this is a nuisance. And then I would say last but not least, one thing I failed to mention earlier, not only has Mayor Mamdani really revived a lot of projects that got sidelined, but he's been spending a lot of time with the delivery population, with the deliverista population, sits with them all the time, putting in

work, announcing huge worker protection clauses that are really first in the nation, really, really siding with the deliveristas who are largely using e-bikes. and really changed the face of who was cycling in New York City, I would say. I think the deliveries are some of the most, it's one of the most transformative movements for cycling I think we've seen, because it really changed the face of who we imagine is cycling. And also, these are the folks who are delivering our food and delivering all of our supplies. And the pandemic completely brought that to light. That being said, this is also a group who really doesn't like the e-motos, particularly because not only are they dangerous, but also they're really painting a bad name for them. where they have to now deal with the negative effect of this, of this like public stigma around it. So I would say we're seeing some momentum. There are legal on the streets, but there's barely any enforcement. So I think they're now trying to figure out ways that we get at the supply chain of these manufacturers. Most of it is a shadow economy. And I should shout out Streets Blog and my colleague Kevin and the reporters at Streets Blog who have been doing really incredible work highlighting just how these vehicles continue to get on the streets.

Speaker 2

They need to be regulated. They really are not bicycles.

Speaker 3

Yeah, they're motorcycles.

Speaker 2

They're motorcycles.

Speaker 3

And I think a lot of the deliveries who already face that backlash with the e-bikes are kind of like, oh, grief, another thing I have to deal with, another thing that's out of our control. So they've also joined the bandwagon of regulation.

Speaker 2

Well, and that always brings up the kinds of things like, okay, then these things think they're okay in bike lanes and on bike paths and in places where they're dangerous to pedestrians and other cyclists. let alone what they do in the streets. Yeah, it's a real problem. It's a real problem. How is the, is it, it's Citi Bike you have there?

Speaker 3

Yes.

Speaker 2

They didn't put any e-motos into the Citi Bike system.

Speaker 3

No, they have their electric bikes, which are extremely popular. So I would say there's two things that have come up with Citi Bike recently. And I'll say this as someone who's not only an avid user, I took it this morning to get to the coffee shop I'm sitting in right now, but also someone who's really reported on City Bike a lot and trumpeted the benefits of the system. They really bungled the snowstorm. They really bungled it. The first one I would say they really bungled. The second one they did a better job. They barely cleaned out, cleared out their docks. They were encased in snow for weeks. And this is a system that is privately managed by, is managed by a private company, by Lyft, the rideshare giant, you know, next to Uber. So not only did they get really hit for mismanagement there, but I think on top of that, their prices have really skyrocketed. Making these new modes, like we see with the scooters and the other micro-mobility making them really inaccessible to people, just like really high prices. So it will be interesting to see how Mayor Mamdani applies pressure. He's talked about subsidizing in the past. He's talked about more regulation, maybe public ownership, which other cities have. But this snowstorm and these recent price hikes have really put a spotlight on City Bike for, I would say, their lack of service. And I would say shortcomings as a system. That being said, it's just growing in popularity. So I think it's something that like Can they meet the moment of growth and also be fair to riders? And I think that's the pressures we're seeing right now.

Speaker 2

So you would think that Lyft would look at the expansion of the use as, you know, volume can increase revenue. as well as just raising prices. And I'm not sure what changed that they would raise prices so drastically. Service is service. They knew what the service was going to be on them, on the electric bikes, the e-bikes. So the charging is the charging. I don't understand. And I guess the mayor does need to put some pressure on Lyft to fix this. is not a good idea of making it expensive.

Speaker 3

It's really expensive. I mean, we're talking about If the motive is to get people biking and even beyond that, to get them out of cars, right? And replacing a car trip, let's say that's the ideal motion goal.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 3

Right now it's getting harder and harder to do that. I mean, we're talking about trips that are not that very long on electric bike that are, you know, approaching 10 or \$12 one way, which is like people are just going to take a cab if it's only a little bit more money or just drive. So that's the that's the problem. And this is I had a really interesting chat actually recently with Jeanette Sadikhan. You mentioned Sadikhan before. She was talking about how it was so interesting. She's the person who brought Citi Bike to New

York City. Seeing Mayor Mamdani, the first mayor in her lifetime that grew up with Citi Bike in New York City as a kid, now running the city. And it was a really fascinating conversation about, for so many people, this is a part of life now. So really, how can the city turn this into a true mass transit system? Right now, these barriers are definitely They're definitely holding that up.

Speaker 2

She's in Europe now, as I remember.

Speaker 3

She goes all over, but I think, yes.

Speaker 2

I think she's headquartered. Is she still with Bloomberg? Yeah. OK, so then I'm wondering, since it was really her idea, I mean, well, she's the one who I should say really expanded the idea of bike lanes in New York City and was instrumental in doing some of the things that have made New York such a better place to bike than a lot of other places, and walk for that matter. Did she have any ideas about how to take this Citi Bike issue and approach it?

Speaker 3

She really was outspoken about the criticism of how they handled the snowstream and really talked about stricter enforcement, a better contract. Right now, the city pays \$0.00 for cities. It's entirely run by Lyft. They pay no city dollars. The only thing Citibank has to pay is for taking up street space. They have to pay a fee, taking up the street space because they're storing their own product there basically. But other than that, they see the city pays nothing for it. And that kind of creates this almost uneven relationship, I would say, where I think. There's less public pressure from City Hall to do something because they're getting this product basically virtually for free. And I think that makes an uneven relationship. So I think that's something that needs to be explored. It's something the last mayor said he would do, subsidizing it, never did it. And it's something that Zuran, who quite frankly takes city bikes all over the place. He rides all over the city. The big city bike, these are big cyclists. We'll see. We've had to hear what's next, but it's being talked about a lot right now.

Speaker 2

And there is no competition for city bike.

Speaker 3

There's no competition. The The only thing we have close to it is we're having a little bit of a micro mobility pilot in some parts of the city that scooters and e-bikes that are dockless. Otherwise it's only, it's only Citi Bike.

Speaker 2

Yeah, our little community here uses a dockless system too, but very interesting, very interesting. Yeah, I mean, I can see how it would make such a difference to have people on Citi Bikes instead of even cabs, you know, that they're not taking up yet another automobile with one person in it.

Speaker 3

Yes. And I think that, I mean, again, if we treat this, if we want this to be a mass transit system, which the numbers are going in that direction, ridership is skyrocketing, then we have to start actually creating policies that treat it like a mass transit system. I mean, whether that's a cap, maybe it's the same price of a subway ride, a bear cap, maybe it's... You could use, it's unified in the fair, whatever it might be, whether, whether you can tap your card or something with like a subway. That I think is the planning that I'd like to see come from this administration going forward. Because then you could actually really do the multimodal kind of trips in the city that we're not, that I think we're hindered to do right now. And expand the system to cover the five boroughs, which it doesn't cover the whole city. Oh, one last thing I'll mention that's been a big point of conversation is the World Cup. The World Cup is coming very soon to the whole country. And it is being definitely discussed. I would say maybe less on erecting bike lanes super fast, because I think that'd be a somewhat hard to do maybe between now and June. But it's definitely being discussed in terms of public space, pedestrian spaces. Can we close some corridors down to cars? Because there's going to be so many people out and about in the street. The World Cup is really creating this moment to have the citywide conversation around pedestrianization. other public space moments that I think is really intriguing and very compelling, just given how many people that we know are going to come and see them.

Speaker 2

Where are you going to put all these people?

Speaker 3

So I think when we're thinking about Midtown Manhattan or Lower Manhattan, North of Brooklyn or whatever, that's where you get you start to have a really interesting conversation around closing entire quarters, throwing game time.

Speaker 2

I remember when we had the Republican National Convention here. And people just rented their homes out as Airbnbs and left the area and were charging outrageous amounts of money for people to come to the convention. So I'm wondering if that kind of thing might be happening for the world. I wouldn't be even a little bit surprised. So what projects are you working on this spring and going into summer? You always are interesting and have such cool projects that you work on.

Speaker 3

I'm always working on a couple of different things. I'll share one that I think would be really interesting to yourself and also this podcast, this audience. I'm working on a research project at the think tank I work at, Center for Design in the Future, about making the business case for livable streets. And it's not just small businesses and entrepreneur. This is a couple of different things. It's like We hear data here and there. We know that, bike lanes are good for business. It brings cyclism. It makes the street calmer. People want to go there. But I want to really hear from small businesses, entrepreneurs, and also big employers, big companies that are saying, hey, actually, people really do want a bike. This is something my younger employees especially are really asking about, whether that's a bike storage at work, whether that's some sort of benefit, whether that's bike lanes in your place that you live in. whatever it might be, we're really trying to make an economic case for livable streets in a way that I don't think we hear, we often don't hear a lot from the big companies, these like tech companies, these big employers that are really hearing that this is a major thing that people care about. And I really want to, I'm curious to see what our research could look like there and what we can add to the conversations.

Speaker 2

So when you talk about those kinds of things, are you already doing data collection?

Speaker 3

Yes, it's been mostly interviews and some anecdotal evidence. And then what I've been doing too is asking a lot of small businesses, hey, on a day that let's say you close the street down to people or you have an event, what's your foot traffic look like? What do your sales look like? And I ask 10 small businesses that question and I start to have some data, right? Some data from qualitative analysis. With the tech employers, I'm thinking about doing a survey. We're thinking about a couple different things. Right now, it's been mostly anecdotal. And we're hearing across the board, it's increasingly a priority. I wouldn't say it's the number one priority. Number one priority is typically affordability for parents at schools, why they move somewhere or why they want to live somewhere. But it's increasingly something people are seeking out, which is like, I want to live in a place where I can generally bike ride, where I could feel comfortable walking around, you know, not just public safety wise, but also feeling safe against our traffic. And like, I'd like to see a restaurant have outdoor tidying and feel like I, there's options. So I really want a couple of bigger companies to say that because I think there was a really strong message that it's something the private sector is hearing more and more when they're trying to decide where to live and what they want. I think this is something that you really hear it. I feel like I know that amongst like especially Gen. Z and younger folks, they're getting driver's licenses less, they're biking more, but it's something that I really want to hear from the employers themselves.

Speaker 2

Add the question about showers.

Speaker 3

It's so funny. I was just thinking of the showers thing yesterday. I'm just like, do you have a space for it? You know, I've had a couple of companies tell me they put the space in and it's already full and now they don't have enough, you know, which is great to hear.

Speaker 2

That's interesting.

Speaker 3

Yes. You know, so once you really market it and really tell people about it.

Speaker 2

Even if you use a city bike, you're going to come in and maybe want to take a shower, have a locker, have a place to clean up before you hit the desk for 8 hours. Wow, that's really fascinating. What else are you working on? What's going on with Central Park? Anything.

Speaker 3

Central Park, nothing of late. I've done a couple different projects with them. I've done some stories on it so far. One big thing is a debate right now over the e-bike speed limit. The last mayor put a cap in to limit e-bikes to 15 mph, 20 mph in the city, I think, 15 mph in Central Park. And it's something that maybe to the chagrin of some advocates, Mayor Mamdani agrees with and wants to keep in place and feels like that is the safe speed for them to be going at. And as you know, he's an e-bike rider himself. But it's been an interesting debate. Central Park, especially because it's a huge place for cycling now. So you're really pitting avid cyclists versus pedestrians versus regular users. And the mayor has sided with the speed limit. So that's been a really interesting debate right now. I can't yet decide whether I what I think about it. I generally. I could see the, I could see both sides to that one.

Speaker 2

I guess when I look at e-bikes and the pedal assist and the throttle and the class 1, 2, 3 and all of that, you begin to wonder what the manufacturers are thinking and doing and where they could get involved in. And they do studies on that too. But I'm going to probably side with the mayor on this one that at least in a place where you're confined, Central Park is confined in some way.

Speaker 3

Yes.

Speaker 2

You know, that maybe, I mean, people run people over even without any electric assist, you know?

Speaker 3

Yes, being confined is a really good point, right? Like there's just so many people. So going more than 20 mph, yeah, propose a danger, no matter how, say if you make the roads to some extent, just having to speed like that.

Speaker 2

Then there's enforcement. it's one thing to say the speed limit's 15 miles an hour. It's something else to actually catch some people doing 2025 and then what are you going to do? Give me a ticket.

Speaker 3

And for what it's worth, the minute they enacted that speed limit, the last term, the last mayor enacted it, Citi Bike, you know, this is actually a good example of what the city could do. Citi Bike immediately followed suit, lowered the speed on all the bikes to abide by it. So the city has that power, right? Things within its realm, but private manufacturers a bit different. They can lead industry and tell industry, this is what we're going to allow. But at the end of the day, whether the private manufacturers and there's enforcement, you know, kind of go by it, that's a different story.

Speaker 2

Right, right. Well, always interesting. Okay, anything else?

Speaker 3

The last thing I'll mention, I like to share.

Speaker 2

That you can, right?

Speaker 3

Yeah, that I can share. I'm really interested in doing something around school streets and these streets in front of schoolers. I look to Europe, I think, for examples in some South American countries. But I really want to write a story. I've been pitching a story around maybe TBA on who publishes it and where it gets published. But I'm in talks right now to do something on school streets and looking around the world at these cities that are really, you know, politically really, really putting children first. And I think it's actually a really powerful message. I think there's few people that can say that school shouldn't have that street. The children should come. last, right? So I think as a political strategy for the local streets world, it's actually really fascinating. And we're seeing cities really advance on that. We're going a little bit slower here in the United States, some examples here and there, but you know, closing the streets in front of schools to cars so

they can have more space to play or just do pick up and drop off, something that's really picking up speed. And you see this with the bike bus, you see this with other kind of movements. I really want to feature the how much this is taking off. I think it's really, and I've done reporting on the bike bus in the past, but really to see how this is taking off. I think it's a really interesting next step in terms of advocacy and organizing. Again, because children were talking about, you know, and kids.

Speaker 2

And you have kids who either have or are developing asthma.

Speaker 3

Yes.

Speaker 2

So much congestion, speaking of congestion pricing, so much congestion in front of these stories. And then kids are terrified to ride to work. And we all rode to work as kids, or walked, or walked. So I, yeah, I think that's great. I'm anxious to hear if you can like push that story. I'd like to know more about it.

Speaker 3

Definitely.

Speaker 2

I can't believe we're going to run out of time. We are. Okay, so let's talk about Street Beat for a moment. It takes you the whole month, I imagine, to put it together.

Speaker 3

So I would say if we're breaking the month into four weeks, I spend the first three weeks. Anytime I see something or something going on, I make notes. I put bullet points down, especially for, and this is a kind of shout out to all of you, to your audience and your listeners, especially job postings. I really share jobs, especially right now. It's such a crazy job market. I really try to share jobs in the cycling urbanism world, and they could be anywhere. I have a forum in the newsletter to share jobs, but really I'm collecting jobs for the whole month. I'm collecting things that I'm working on, some thoughts that I have going on. the first three weeks, and then I really spend that 4th week every single day assembling a little bit or a piece of it. So it's a sprint every month?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I know.

Speaker 3

It's sprint, as you know, as someone who, a former Substacker, you know, it's a sprint.

Speaker 2

Right. Well, when I did a show every single week, 50 weeks a year, yep, it's a sprint. It's actually almost a marathon. You know, you just got to keep on plugging. Well, Street Beat. So you can find John on Substack. Go to Street Beat, is it Streetbeat.com?

Speaker 3

Streetbeat.substack.com. And obviously you just type in Streetbeat, Substack, you'll find it pretty quickly.

Speaker 2

Yeah, right. And it's John, S-U-R-I-C-O. I always look forward to it. It's always the last day of the month. It came out February 28th, right on time. And the other thing I'd like to say is thank you for all the referrals you send me.

Speaker 3

Absolutely. Of course. Yeah. I think that's the great part of Substack. It is. It's very cool. It's something that I think I wish there was more of that in a lot of the professional network. So no, I'm happy to always be triggered.

Speaker 2

And people always say, oh, I found it on Street Pete.

Speaker 3

So that's great.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 3

Thanks, Diane. I appreciate it.

Speaker 2

Have a great spring. We'll talk towards the end of summer. How's that?

Speaker 3

Yes, absolutely. Thanks for having me, as always. You'll know where to find me.

Speaker 2

I do. Thank you.

Speaker 3

Thanks, Diane.

Speaker 2

My thanks to John for joining me today. In our ongoing conversations about New York City's cycling and walking culture, we often see what the future might look like elsewhere in the country. My sense is that today was no different, and in fact, in my next several episodes, we'll focus on e-bike issues and the bicycle industry's role in making sure that an e-bike is truly a bicycle. If you want to know what is happening in New York City and beyond as it pertains to urban culture, subscribe to John's Substack, Street Beat. It's a monthly compilation of the work he's doing, as well as some networking opportunities. I always find it enlightening and interesting, and it's always on time. You can find him at streetbeat.substack.com. My thanks to you for tuning in today. Remember that you can find links, photos, and a written transcript of the show at outspokencyclist.com. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, and consider subscribing to my Substack for added commentary. Our next episode features the iconic mountain bike superstar Hans Rey in a heartfelt conversation about e-bikes and the consequences he sees if we don't act on some clarification of terms and the industry doesn't push for changes. We've already experienced a few outstanding spring days here in Northeast Ohio and are looking forward to warmer temps and lots of sunshine. So please stay safe. Stay well, and remember, there is always time for a ride. 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 to leave a comment on any episode. We will be back next week with new guests, topics, conversations, and news in the world of cycling. Subscribe to the show in 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 WJCU-FM Cleveland, a service of John Carroll University. Thanks again for listening, ride safely, and we'll see you next week.