

# There are better ways to get around town

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New York and other American cities should look to Europe for ideas about solving the urban traffic and safety crisis.

## John Massengale

The debate continues over how to make New York City's streets less crowded, safer and better for people as well as cars. Some, like Gov. Andrew Cuomo, call for congestion pricing in Manhattan, although so far the New York State Legislature has not allowed that. Mayor Bill de Blasio and groups such as Transportation Alternatives promote Vision Zero, aiming for zero traffic deaths in New York City by 2024.

It's worth looking at European cities, which have led the movement to make city streets that are as good for public life as they are for driving. In recent months, I've visited four of the cities with the most innovative street designs: London, Stockholm, Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

London and Stockholm were the first major European cities to have congestion zones, and Sweden also gave us Vision Zero. Amsterdam and Copenhagen are the cycling capitals of Europe, although they have taken different approaches to making places for cycling and walking.

We can use the best of their ideas in New York — and indeed in other American cities — to reduce driving, air pollution and traffic deaths, and make streets where people want to get out of their cars and walk.

traffic engineers developed to make traffic flow quickly.

3. When you throw out all the detritus of traffic engineering, it becomes much easier to make beautiful places where people want to walk. Bike riding becomes more pleasant and safer as well.

Some old-school traffic engineers in America will tell you that many of the Dutch ideas are unsafe. What they mean is that they make streets unsafe for fast driving. In 2016, the Netherlands had 33 traffic deaths for every million people. America had 118 traffic deaths per million.

### THE COPENHAGEN LANE

Like Amsterdam, Copenhagen in the 1960s had a strong culture of cycling threatened by a booming economy that filled its streets with cars and trucks. In response, Copenhagen went in a different direction than Amsterdam, making some roads in the center car-free while rebuilding major thoroughfares to give pedestrians and bicycles equal access to the city.

Copenhagen's planners thought it was both unsafe and uncivilized to allow city traffic to go faster than 30 m.p.h., so they designed streets that naturally held cars to that speed — by narrowing the traffic lanes and keeping the streets two-way.

They used the extra space between the buildings for wider sidewalks and broad bike lanes, and they designed the wider sidewalks and new cycle lanes to separate the pedestrians and cyclists from the cars.