

# InfrastructureUSA

## Guest on THE INFRA BLOG

**Eben Weiss, Writer, BikeSnobNYC Blog**

**Conversation with Steve Anderson, Managing Director, InfrastructureUSA**

### **New World of Cycling**

I've always ridden bikes. And I've always loved to ride bikes from the time that I learned how to do it, and I have done it all my life despite the fact that the infrastructure isn't always particularly well suited to it. And when I was younger, I was always fine with that; again I love to do it so much I just want to be out there, and I was never really afraid of motorists. I never felt that uncomfortable, but that's because I was young and I love to ride, so I was willing to overcome that. As I've gotten older, a couple of things have happened. One of them is I have a son now, and the other thing is that where I live, New York City, has really invested a lot in bicycle infrastructure. And that has opened up this new world of riding to me. This ability to just get on your bike and ride – on streets that take you and your mode of transportation into account, that don't require you to fight a hostile system: you know signals just for you, lanes just for you. It's allowed me to ride with my family, ride with my son on my bike, ride comfortably, and it's brought many, many more cyclists out there. Because again, as somebody who loved to do it, who was a bike racer, I would be out there regardless. However most people want to ride their bike, but they don't do it because they don't feel comfortable. And when you enhance the infrastructure and bring it up to date, and actually address the needs of everybody, not just motorists, it allows that to happen.

### **Bike Snob Abroad: Ripple Effect**

The book I've written is about travelling to Amsterdam, among other places, and this is a place that's made it possible to ride a bike safely. They've made it accessible, they've integrated it into the city, and everybody does it. It enhances all other modes of transportation. People in this country have this way of thinking, "You ride a bike, that's all you do. You don't get around any other way," but it all compliments each other. I mean you can ride a bike to a train, you can park your car and ride your bike from the parking – there's all of these things, all these ways that can compliment each other, and we've been loathe to do that for some reason.

### **Cycling Infrastructure in the US**

I've gotten to travel in the last few years, and seems like most cities these days are upgrading infrastructure and adding bike amenities. (taken from the end of this paragraph) And some are doing it better than others, but it seems like pretty much everybody's doing it. You know, you have the obvious examples with places like Portland. They've done a great job there. And if you go to Minneapolis, they've done a great job in Minneapolis, and if you go to a city like Madison, they've done a great job in Madison. And you hear about other cities making a commitment; I'm always reading

about Los Angeles really wanting to make a commitment to making it more bike-friendly, and here in New York it's night and day, what they've done in the last ten or so years. All the stuff they've added, it's just incredible what they've done. I'd stress that not only as a cyclist but as someone who also takes a train, as someone who also drives a car, it's made all of that stuff better.

### **Shocked into Engagement**

I think we've been woefully blind to how bad the infrastructure is, in a lot of ways. Specifically how dangerous it is, and how many deaths there are due to driving, and I'm not an anti-driving person at all – I own and use a car – I think we've gotten to a point where we tend to use them heedlessly and irresponsibly, and it's very easy because they're so common and such a part of our lives, and we take them so for granted, we're not really in touch with how dangerous they are. I'm not just talking about pollution of the environment or anything like that, I'm talking about a car hitting you, and cars hitting each other, cars hitting cyclists, cars hitting pedestrians. And that's not something that hits home with most people until it happens to them, and I think we need to wake up to that and be collectively taken aback by it. And realize that by improving things, you make things safer. Again, to go back to the Netherlands, and to Amsterdam, they became a car-centric country just like we were. Around the 70's they started to go very car-centric, and the death tolls, traffic death tolls, increased dramatically when lots more cars came on the road; and they were disturbed by this, they didn't like this happening and they made a conscious decision to scale back on cars, and to make infrastructure more accessible to everybody, to cyclists, to pedestrians, to make it safer. We haven't had that moment here it seems, that we're kind of fed up with how dangerous things are. But I think that's something to focus on, because it needs to happen. Cities shouldn't be so dangerous for people, for children.

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