

24/7 cycling access opens up new transportation possibilities: View

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(Photo: New York State Thruway Authority)

Re "24/7 access to bridge pathway? Maybe not ([/story/opinion/editorials/2017/06/27/unbridled-access-new-tappan-zee-bridge-pathway-maybe-not/429127001](https://www.penguin.com/ajax/books/excerpt/9780140435313))," June 27 editorial:

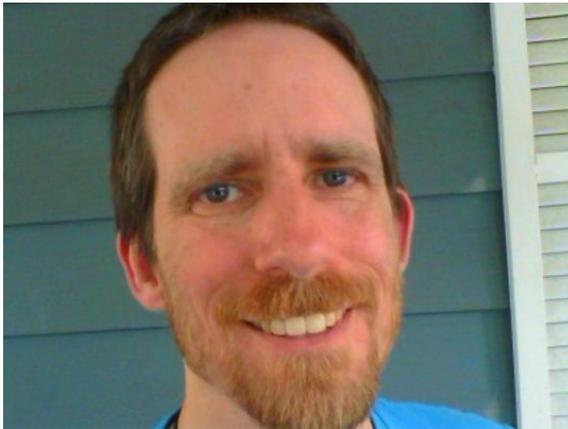
This editorial view is straight out of "Flatland (<http://www.penguin.com/ajax/books/excerpt/9780140435313>): A Romance of Many Dimensions," in which the characters are flat shapes who can only comprehend two dimensions. A lot of people in Westchester and Rockland are stuck in that same universe, in their cars.

Well, like the three-dimensional "A Sphere" in the story, I'm "A Cyclist," here to say there's another way to get around. I ride my bike to do things — usually around Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown, shopping for groceries, visiting friends, even going to the lumberyard. Sometimes I venture farther, like White Plains, New Paltz, the Adirondacks, Michigan. And I'm not alone. People ride their bikes all sorts of places, at all hours of the day and night. Just like people driving.

When protected bike facilities are built, particularly networks of them, people use them. Loads of people, actually. And that will happen here, too. I speak to people daily who want to ride bikes to get places. But they're terrified of being hit by a driver. So my friends keep driving. So our public policy is to keep building roads and parking lots. It's time to break this self-perpetuating cycle.

To that end, I am working with a wide array of residents, businesses and officials to design protected bicycle lanes on Route 9 in Sleepy Hollow through Hastings-on-Hudson, as well as on Route 119 from the Tappan Zee Bridge to downtown White Plains. Several villages around Nyack are also working to expand their bike lane systems. Scenic Hudson is studying how connect RiverWalk under the bridge.

In addition, the Empire State Trail will span the entire breadth of New York. The local segment will use the South and North County Trailways. These initiatives will improve the economic and physical health of our towns.



Daniel Convisor of Bike Tarrytown. (Photo: SUBMITTED)

Let's get back to the bridge path hours. Full access is a matter of socio-economic justice. It opens up job opportunities for people seeking late-night or early-morning shifts for those who can't, or don't want to, dump \$10,000 per year on a car.

When a transportation facility is closed sometimes, potential users wind up thinking things like: "Is it going to be open when I come home? I might have to work late. I'm not sure. Guess I should get there some other way." And that way, generally, is driving.

In my travels by bike, I've been stuck at closed paths on bridges mentioned in the editorial. Four times. I'm sure I wasn't the first, nor the last. Pointless wastes of time and energy, plus extra risks incurred, due to planning by Flatlanders. Plus, closing and reopening the path, and enforcement thereof, has a direct cost to facility operators.

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Dr. Scott Bernstein prepares to ride his bike from the Tarrytown train in December 2014 as part of his commute to NYU. (Photo: JOURNAL NEWS FILE PHOTO)

Metro-North trains stop at Tarrytown 22 hours per day. The bike-train combination is a tremendous way to keep people out of cars, particularly at off hours when there's little to no bus service available. People living and working in Rockland County deserve this option.

Motor vehicles are the No. 2 cause of injury death in the U.S. (just below the opioid crisis), and No. 1 for kids. There's the climate impact, as well as noise, air and water pollution; our society's general lack of exercise; the prime real estate gobbled up by (ugly) parking lots that could instead be homes, stores, offices and parks.

The wait-and-see approach just doesn't cut it. If the option to ride at off hours isn't there, the demand isn't going to be demonstrated. But if you build it, they will come.

Some in South Nyack are anxious about the unknown. Late-night cyclists are people just like you and me, quietly biking to or from our homes in area neighborhoods. Sleeping residents don't even notice. All the while, cars and trucks roar by.

Here is a thought experiment: Take every point raised by people suggesting closing the path overnight. Then change all references and inferences of "path" to "road," and "cyclist" or "pedestrian" to "driver." Some examples:

- "Where would people go once they crossed the Hudson?"
- "We don't really have an economy that's built around late-night activity."
- "It's just hard to see what the positives would be."
- "Take a wait-and-see approach on how the roadway is actually used."

They don't make any sense for cars and drivers, right? That's because of the universe you're accustomed to.

Use your imagination. Think of another dimension. Put yourself in the shoes of someone whose sole or primary mode of transportation is, or could be, riding a bicycle.

Biking for transportation is fun, fast, fit and free. Try it. It instills you with a sense of empowerment and true freedom. As long as you can get across the bridge.

The writer is director of [Bike Tarrytown \(https://biketarrytown.org/\)](https://biketarrytown.org/).

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