

The Bike Boom of the Century

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Since COVID-19 hit in 2020, cities have been forced to repurpose hundreds of miles of road to meet the need of thousands of new bicyclists. Due to the drastic changes of everyday life, social distancing has forced people to avoid riding in crowded subways/buses and choose a more efficient way to travel, a bike¹. Even though this boom came as somewhat of a surprise in 2020, it can be compared to the early 1970s bike boom that was driven mainly by the ecological concern of cars causing more environmental problems².

In today's society, bicycling is now a way for people to maintain social distancing, get fresh air, exercise, and travel much easier than driving in a city full of traffic. However, because of this huge increase in bicyclists, many cities face issues having to accommodate city roads and highways for these people to travel safely. The U.S. transportation system tends to wait until enough bicyclists are injured in a specific area, in order to accommodate for bike paths³. Unlike many European cities, there is not a very strong cycling network in the U.S. because instead of building bike paths to encourage people to cycle more, the departments tend to wait until there is a demand for it⁴. Bicyclists face many issues of having to find safe ways to travel because of a lack of structure for bike paths in the U.S.. This results in bicyclists riding only a few feet away from large vehicles travelling past them at high speeds. Even though a lot more investment has gone into building a better structure for bicyclists, there is still a lot of work to be done. The

¹<https://www.businessinsider.com/cycling-boom-us-streets-infrastructure-bike-lanes-history-united-states-2020-12>

²<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2020/05/01/bicycling-booms-during-lockdown-but-theres-a-warning-from-history/?sh=6d484f9f41cf>

³<https://www.businessinsider.com/cycling-boom-us-streets-infrastructure-bike-lanes-history-united-states-2020-12>

⁴<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-23/how-the-coronavirus-affected-biking-in-u-s-cities>

biggest issue is that in an accident between a vehicle and a bicyclist, the bicyclist is likely to always lose. This leaves the bicyclist always exposed to the highest risk, since they are not well protected.

As more cities continue to create safer and more structured bike paths with this rising bicyclist population, the goal would be to cut the number of fatalities in half, if not even more. (Figure 1).

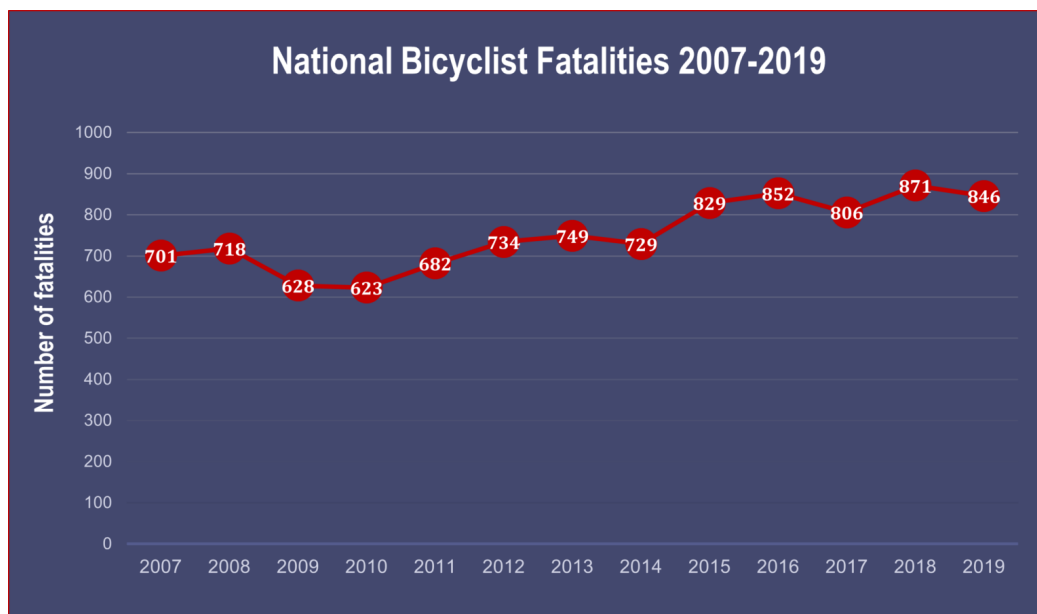


Figure 1. Cyclists Fatalities in the U.S.⁵

With this COVID-19 bike boom, the best solution would be focusing on the importance of bike culture in the U.S. transportation system. Since they are the people who are structuring and creating safe bike paths, it is important to continue to emphasize the necessity of making sure that bicyclists are able to ride as safely as possible. This starts with identifying what areas have the highest accidents and observing the infrastructure of the bike paths. Making the transportation system aware of what areas have the highest accidents and why, can lead to changing the way they structure new bike paths in the future.

⁵ <https://bayareabicyclelaw.com/safety-laws/bike-stats/>

The bicyclist population is clearly here to stay and it is essential that we encourage the culture by creating safe bike paths and advocating for their safety as we share our roads with them.