

A City Re-imagined (2022)

By Ahmad Banoo

Mobility and transportation are essential daily activities. Every day, we travel for various reasons and the life of a person in South Africa revolves around the ability to get around. The unfortunate reality is that we have a dysfunctional public transportation system, and a huge emphasis on private motor vehicles. The fact that (certain) people in Joburg are more worried about repairing potholes instead of a functional public transport system speaks volumes.

In addition to this, the cost of transportation is continuously rising for all people, without any effort being made at finding viable alternatives that reduce the stress on people. If we didn't have to drive cars, imagine the savings in terms of stress, time and financial. It is time we looked at and implemented alternatives. As cyclists, we know just how valuable a bicycle is. Here is some food for thought.

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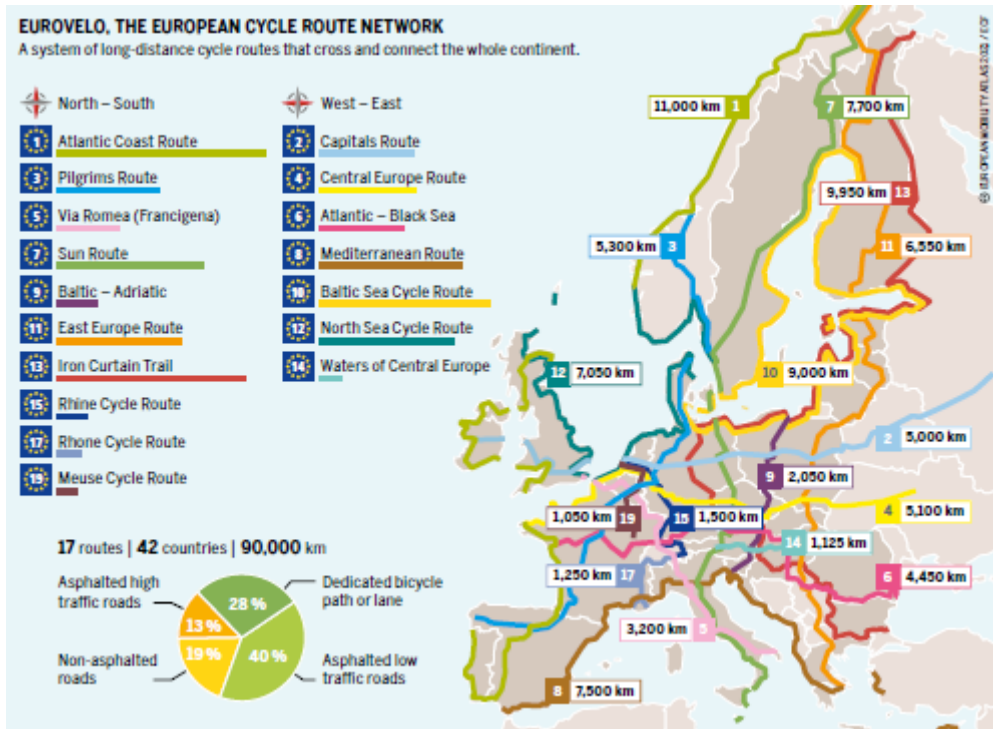
GAUTENG HOUSEHOLDS SPENT 10% OF THEIR INCOME ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT - GHTS

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Nearly 60% of households spent more than the policy maximum target of 10% of their income on public transport in 2019/20, up from 55% in 2014, according to the Gauteng Household Travel Survey (GHTS) released recently.

Source: [CSIR](#)

Typical spend on transport – it's very likely a lot more than 10%. Poorer homes spend up to 60% of their income on transportation

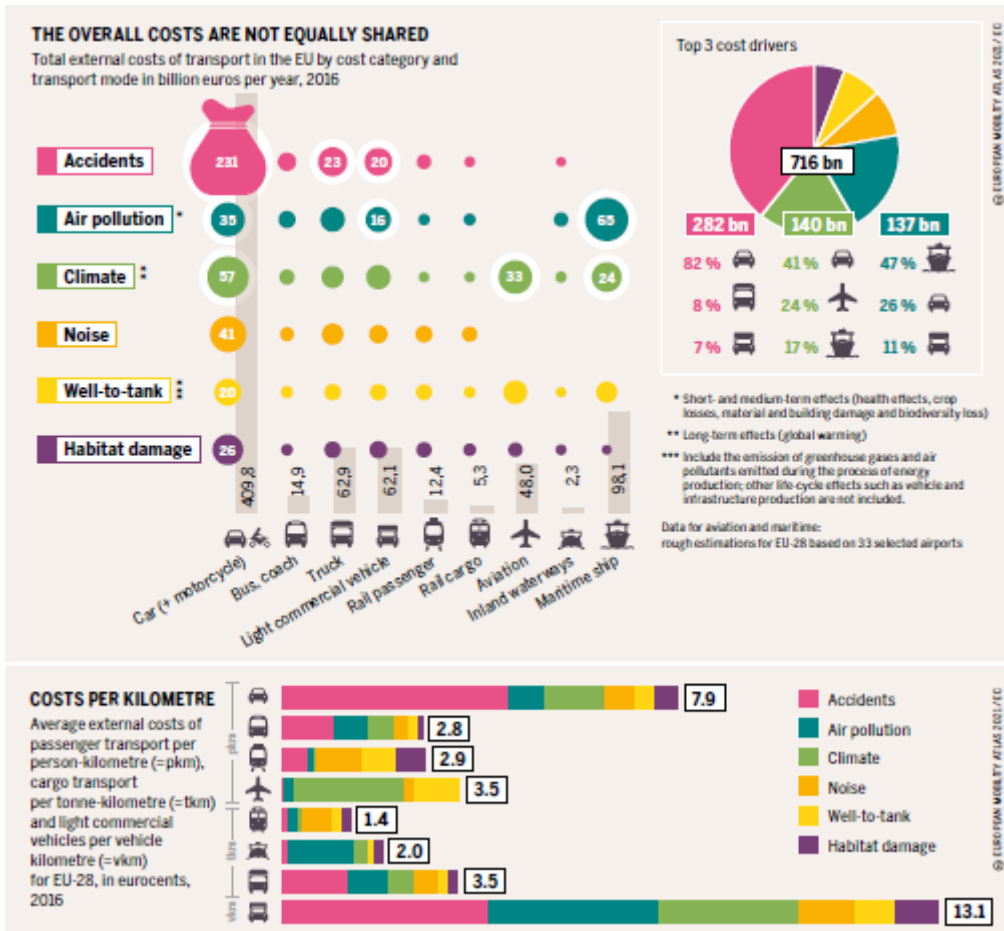


Source: www.eu.boell.org

Bicycle EU- the Europe wide network of cycle infrastructure – IT IS POSSIBLE

The cost of transportation is only set to increase with rising fuel costs, with a disproportionate load on our lower income citizens. Aside from direct transport costs there are several other hidden costs, these would be:

1. Continued pattern of exclusive urban areas, which creates structural inequality and prevents people from escaping the trap of poverty.
2. Loss of time for family, recreation, and learning
3. Increased health costs due to illnesses that could be mitigated by exercise
4. Climate change reversal
5. Transformation of our urban environments



Source: www.eu.boell.org

Bicycles (and walking) offer a healthy and cheap solution to our transport needs. Clearly these modes of transport don't exist in isolation but work best with a well-designed transportation system that places people at its centre rather than private motor vehicles.



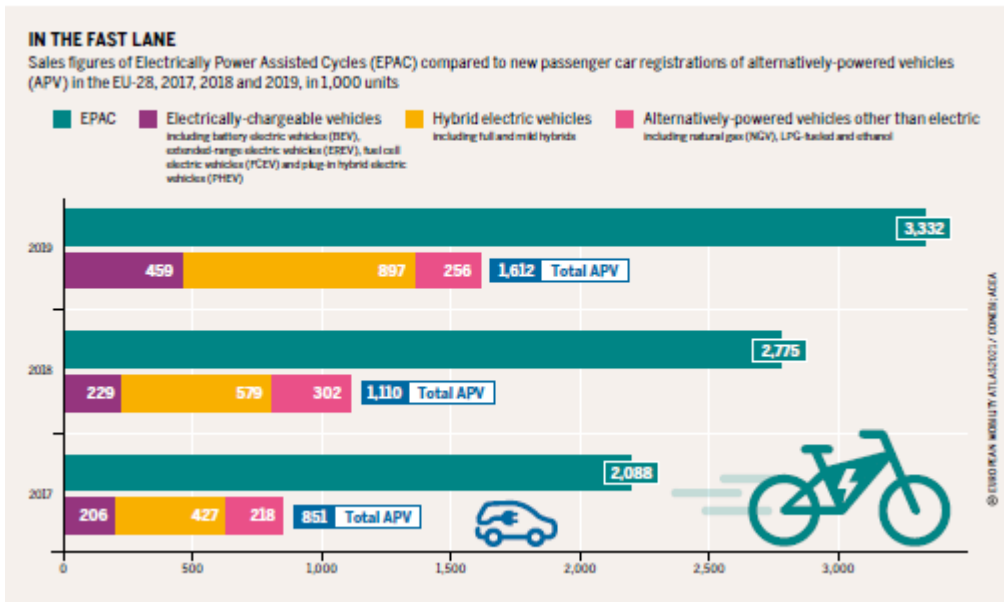
How most traffic engineers see your city



How cities should be designed

COPEN
HAGEN
DESIGN
Copenhagen Design Co.
2013

A further component of a people centred transportation system is the electric bicycle. With rapidly improving technology, and I don't mean the latest from Shimano and SRAM, but rather mass mobility options. The graphic below shows that e-bikes are outselling electric cars in Europe. E-bikes are a game changer as they respond positively to almost every excuse to avoid riding a bike.



Source: www.eu.boell.org

As the technology becomes more common and cheaper, I hope to see these bikes becoming a regular means of transport in Joburg, and the country in general.

SALE

100% OFF

ON FUEL CHARGES

if you select the right vehicle

*conditions will always apply

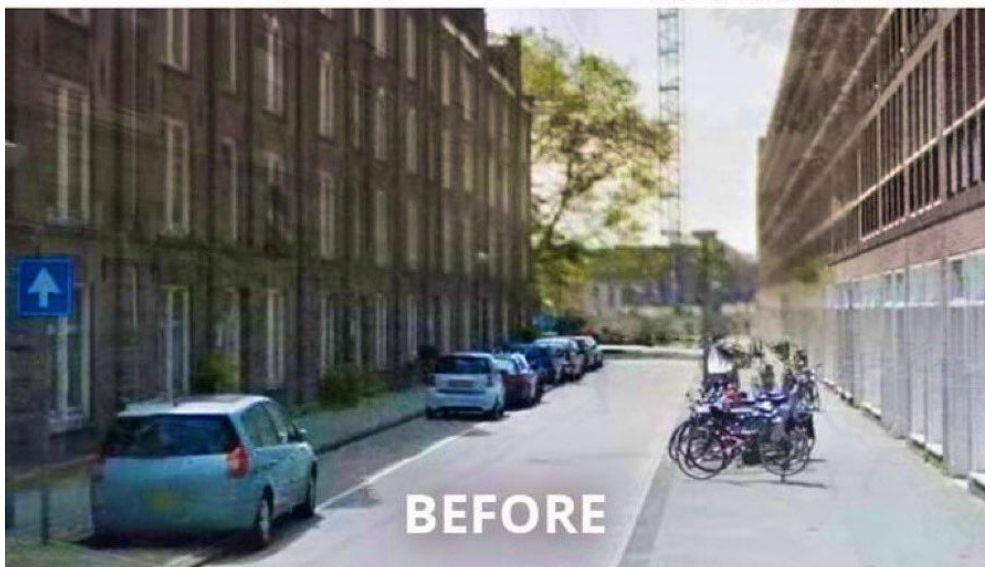
pedalandring.com

I need not remind you also of the urgency of Climate Change, the evidence is all around us. Transportation contributes 10.8% of our Greenhouse Gas emissions. During lockdown, when no cars moved about, the skies were clear.

The question is how we shift the agenda so that our city transforms. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you can ride a bike to buy a loaf of bread or your child can get to school in foot or by bike. We have to aspire to live in a place that is accessible, safe for children and encourages wellbeing

Same street, 6 yrs apart!

via Goundwork Greater Manchester



The Fifteen Minute City

A new movement in urban design is rising, it's more of a return to city building principles that were established before we were held ransom by private cars. It's about building to a people scale with all amenities accessible within a 15 minute commute by bike or foot. Right now there is a revolution going on. I would direct you to look at the following cities:

Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Medellin, Madrid and Seoul

Can we achieve this in Joburg? 50 years ago, Amsterdam resembled Joburg, choked with cars and pollution. With will and a collective energy the Amsterdam is now a leading example of integrated public transport and NMT (non-motorised transport) options. We need to ask how can this be achieved, so that we can enjoy a better quality of life. There is an acronym that we should embrace – LTN – Low Traffic Neighbourhood.



The common reply is 'the government' must do it. If we all take this view nothing will ever get done. Instead let us ask what can we do? How do citizens transform the city?

1. Organise locally with likeminded people
2. Work with your city to create car-free days (check out Open Streets Cape Town).
3. Be mindful of your car use and other road users.
4. Vote wisely for people who care and wish to implement a better city strategy.
5. Don't be a NIMBY and stand in the way of mixed use densification and public transportation.

In every one of these pictures, there is a consistent message, loose the cars and get on bicycles. I look forward to hearing ideas, and also a shift in attitudes from the people of Joburg to transport alternatives, and urban environments that are easy to navigate, light on the pocket and fun, after all isn't riding a bike just that. We have wonderful climate and a city waiting to be unlocked. It would be a shame to miss out on this opportunity.

Ahmad Banoo