

E-Bike Safety Survey

In response to numerous complaints and reports of crashes and other incidents, the Park Slope Civic Council, joined by Good Neighbors of Park Slope, conducted a survey of traffic-law compliance by human-powered bicycles, e-bikes, mopeds and motorcycles. The survey found a very high degree of traffic violations, including running red lights, riding on sidewalks, riding the wrong way on one-way streets (or against traffic on two-way streets), riding at a dangerously high speed, and mopeds or motorcycles riding illegally in bike lanes.

of electric micromobility vehicles but is concerned about the safety hazards posed by the frequent traffic violations the survey found. Moreover, we are concerned that policymakers are making decisions to expand e-bike access without sufficient evidence that it can be done safely.

Our survey led to an 8-page report, which was distributed to elected officials, City agencies and the press. An edited version of report appears below. For the complete version, go to our website: www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

For an interesting news story about the report, go to www.brooklyneagle.com and search on “motorized.”

INTRODUCTION

One of the most noticeable trends in traffic in New York City over the past several years has been the increase in electrically powered, two-wheel vehicles. This increase has many benefits for the City, including replacing automobile traffic with less polluting electric vehicles and creating jobs and economic opportunity for tens of thousands of New Yorkers.

Regrettably, it has also brought about a greatly increased perception on the part of pedestrians that they are at risk of injury from e-bikes. For the Park Slope Civic Council and Good Neighbors of Park Slope, the single largest category of traffic and street-safety complaints over the past two years has concerned e-bikes.

In an effort to explore further the numerous concerns raised with our organizations and to help inform public policy responses to the issue, the Civic Council and Good Neighbors partnered to conduct a neighborhood survey. This survey was designed



Photo credit: Judy Antell

Mopeds and e-bikes on the sidewalk along Flatbush Ave.

All categories of two-wheeled vehicles violated traffic laws frequently. Violations were highest among mopeds and throttle e-bikes.

The Civic Council recognizes the many advantages

President's Letter Spring 2023

Dear Members and Friends –

The Civic Council is nearing the end of a year that, with forgivable hyperbole, we might call historic. We finally—and fully—emerged from the shadow of the pandemic, resuming our historic activities and launching new initiatives.

Perhaps most satisfying was resuming favorite events like **Food for Thought** at the Prospect Park Picnic House, which raised money for our annual scholarships to John Jay graduates. **Civic Sweeps** were also back, both in November and on April 22, with a record number of attendees celebrating Earth Day. The **Halloween Parade** was actually on Halloween for the first time since the pandemic, attracting more than a thousand participants. The **Holiday Coat Drive** and **Toys for Tots**, supported by a \$2,500 grant from Target, delivered winter comfort and holiday joy to hundreds of families and children. And we helped mulch over 2,000 Christmas trees at **Mulchfest**.

All these past events returned this year, better than ever, attracting fantastic participation across the neighborhood and attendance from many of our local elected officials.

We had two signature new initiatives this year. First was the project that is the subject of this special edition of the Civic News, our “**E-Bike Safety Report**.” Responding to multiple complaints, we partnered with our friends at **Good Neighbors of Park Slope** to try to quantify violations of traffic laws on the part of two-wheeled vehicles, particularly e-bikes and mopeds. The report attracted the attention of policymakers in City government and journalists in the press. We'd love to hear from you about it!

Second, last fall we launched a new **Trees Committee**, and volunteers walked every block in the neighborhood, identifying more than 200 empty tree beds, where trees had once been planted but hadn't been replaced. We forwarded the list to Brooklyn Parks Commissioner Marty Maher. Next up for the Trees Committee: working to encourage homeowners and block associations to install tree guards and upgrade tree bed maintenance.

We renewed our campaign to **Extend the Park Slope Historic District** and met with Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll and Council Member Shahana Hanif to make the request. Stay tuned for more info on that!

In ongoing projects, we continued to press for more affordable housing at **Atlantic Yards** (now Pacific Park) and to monitor the developers of the **Key Food Fifth Avenue** site for compliance with the landmark 2017 settlement.

I'm particularly delighted that, at long last, we built an outstanding new website with improved functionality and cost savings to boot. Go to **www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org**.

I am deeply indebted to the **Board of Trustees** of the Civic Council and our dedicated **Executive Committee**. These are the leaders who make the Civic Council a prominent and effective voice for our neighborhood.

*Very truly yours,
Timothy Gilles*

Join!
Renew!
Donate!
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www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org



The Park Slope Civic Council promotes the health, vitality and character of the Park Slope neighborhood and advocates for the interests of residents, businesses and others with a stake in the community.



Established 1896 as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade.
Incorporated 1938.

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The Park Slope Civic Council is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization

Thanks to our contributors:
 Ezra Goldstein, Joe Rydell, Beryll Schiffer and Tiff Ziter

Continued from front cover

and conducted by Civic Council and Good Neighbors volunteers who are not traffic safety professionals. Nonetheless, we believe the findings are significant and carry important messages for policymakers.

SCOPE OF THE SURVEY



Photo credit: Judy Antell

Surveyors at work on Eighth Avenue.

Over the course of several weeks in February and March, 2023, volunteer members observed 21 intersections throughout the neighborhood for 30 minutes at a time, most often with two observers. We surveyed intersections on all of our major avenues—Prospect Park West and 8th, 7th, 6th, 5th and 4th Avenues—intersecting with a mix of different cross streets from Flatbush Avenue to Bartel-Pritchard Square. Some of the intersections had bike lanes on just one street, and some had no bike lanes at all. Some intersections had two one-way streets, some had two two-way streets, and some had one of each. All intersections had traffic signals. We did not make observations in Prospect Park.

Our survey counted every two-wheeled vehicle that passed through the intersections during the survey period and categorized them as regular human-powered bicycles, pedal-assisted e-bikes, throttle e-bikes, mopeds and motorcycles.

During this 10½ hours of surveying, we observed 1,264 vehicles, of which 655, or more than half, vio-

lated traffic laws in ways that posed risks to pedestrians, strollers, dogs, or other cyclists.

Specifically, we found:

- 410 ran red lights.
- 91 rode on sidewalks.
- 41 rode the wrong way, against traffic.
- 45 rode at a dangerously high speed.
- 72 mopeds or motorcycles rode in the bike lane.

ASSESSMENT

The chart shows the distribution of traffic-law violations and unsafe behaviors among the different categories of two-wheeled vehicles surveyed. Mopeds were the most frequent violators. The total of 179 violations by 310 observed mopeds, or 58%, is the highest rate of violations of any vehicle category. More than half of the mopeds observed ran red lights. And nearly 30% rode where they were not allowed, either illegally in bike lanes or on sidewalks or the wrong way against traffic. The 21% found riding in bike lanes is actually an understatement, since many of the surveyed intersections do not have bike lanes. At major intersections with bike lanes, such as Prospect Park West/9th Street or 4th Avenue/Carroll St., we found over two-thirds of mopeds riding illegally in the bike lane where they are not allowed.

Another notable finding is the greater risk posed by throttle e-bikes as compared to pedal-assisted e-bikes. Throttle e-bikes are typically heavier and ride faster than pedal-assisted e-bikes, and moreover, we found a greater frequency of safety violations by throttle e-bikes. For example:

- 56% of throttle e-bikes violated traffic laws. 44% of pedal-assisted e-bikes did.
- 15% of throttle e-bikes rode on sidewalks, the wrong way on a one-way street, or against traffic on a two-way street. We consider these to be the most serious violations, because of the particular threat to pedestrians and children of a vehicle coming rapidly and nearly silently from a completely unexpected direction. 8.6%, a significantly smaller percentage, of pedal-assisted e-bikes committed these violations. Moreover, pedal-assisted e-bikes are often lighter and typi-

Continued on next page

cally travel more slowly, reducing the risk significantly, although any sidewalk riding, even with unpowered regular bikes, is a threat to others on the sidewalk.

- 75% of throttle e-bikes ran red lights, the highest of any category. All categories committed a high percentage of red-light violations, but throttle e-bikes were the worst. This is particularly significant in terms of evaluating the risk of expanding access in Prospect Park, where red-light compliance by vehicles is a crucial safety issue for pedestrians trying to cross park drives in crosswalks.



Photo credit: Judy Antell

E-bike rider on sidewalk with pedestrians.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY ISSUES IN PROSPECT PARK

Cars and other motorized vehicles were banned in Prospect Park in 2018, following decades of citizen advocacy and activism and the accumulation of inarguable evidence that cars posed an unacceptable level of risk. This was a major step forward for safety. However, safety concerns remain to this day, largely involving the simultaneous use of the Park Drive by regular bicycles on the one hand and walkers, runners, wheelchair users, strollers, dog owners, etc. on the other.

We have reviewed and are pleased to support many elements of the Mayor's recent announcement of an

Electric Micromobility Action Plan. However, with respect to his announcement that all categories of e-bikes will be allowed in the City's parks on a pilot basis, we wish this pilot had been rolled out in a phased manner, with pedal-assisted e-bikes allowed initially and throttle e-bikes allowed only if and when careful safety assessment would show that it can likely be done safely.



Photo credit: Judy Antell

Mopeds stopped at the red light - but in the bike lane.

However, we are aware that the decision to allow both pedal-assisted and throttle e-bikes has already been made. In that context, we recommend the following:

1. The design of the e-bike pilot should be integrated with the Parks Department's already announced lane-redesign pilot and should include input from the Sam Schwartz team that has previously assessed safety conditions on the Park Drive.
2. Park authorities should monitor traffic conditions on the Park Drive more closely than usual in order to understand the impact of the e-bike pilot.
3. Police, EMS and Park authorities should develop robust incident reporting and data collection protocols to ensure that vehicles involved in crashes are accurately identified as to type.
4. Particular attention should be paid to ensure that e-bikes—indeed, all two-wheeled vehicles—are walked, not ridden, on pedestrian-only paths and sidewalks into and inside the park.

TYPE OF VEHICLE	Regular Bicycles		Pedal-Assisted e-bikes		Throttle e-bikes		Mopeds		Motorcycles		Totals - All types	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total number observed	283		151		402		310		118		1264	
Total violations	133	47%	66	44%	224	56%	179	58%	53	45%	655	52%
VIOLATION TYPE												
Red light *	101	72%	49	65%	150	75%	80	52%	27	46%	407	65%
Sidewalk	19	7%	13	9%	42	10%	10	3%	6	5%	90	7%
One-way/ against traffic	11	4%	0	0%	18	4%	10	3%	2	2%	41	3%
High speed	2	1%	4	3%	14	3%	15	5%	10	8%	45	4%
Illegally in bike lane **	NA		NA		NA		64	21%	8	7%	72	17%

*To calculate the frequency of red-light violations, we assume that 50% of vehicles encounter a red signal.

**Because only the 428 mopeds & motorcycles can commit this bike-lane violations, the percentage calculator is 72 divided by 428. Even this understates the actual frequency of violations, since only some of the streets we observed have bike lanes.

5. We encourage the Department of Transportation to prioritize completing protected bike lanes in all of the streets that border the park. This will give throttle e-bike riders viable alternatives to riding inside the Park on the Park Drive.

Finally, based on our observations, as well as the significant weight and speed issues, we would oppose any future effort to allow mopeds and motorcycles into Prospect Park or other City parks.

ADDITIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe our survey indicates an unacceptable frequency of traffic violations by all two-wheeled vehicles—particularly the more hazardous throttle e-bikes and mopeds—that pose serious risks to all New Yorkers, whether they be pedestrians, riders of human-powered bicycles or riders of these electric micromobility vehicles themselves.

The Civic Council supports the City’s recent legislative initiatives to increase compensation, improve working conditions and address other challenges facing delivery workers. We also support the Mayor’s expansion of education and training efforts and the other safety measures being implemented. At the same time, we believe policymakers must

consider the possibility that more robust measures may be required to protect the public. Such actions might include:

- Improved data collection regarding crashes, injuries and deaths involving e-bikes and other micromobility vehicles;
- Legislative and/or legal action to hold delivery-app companies accountable for injuries and deaths;
- Tighter regulation of moped sales and rentals to ensure vehicles are properly licensed when sold or rented;
- Some sort of mandatory crash-insurance program to provide health care and compensation for victims;
- Improved signage on bike lanes and in the parks to clarify where various categories of electric micromobility vehicles are and are not allowed; and/or
- More consistent, predictable and non-discriminatory enforcement of traffic violations by electric micromobility vehicles.

The Park Slope Civic Council would welcome the opportunity to work with appropriate City agencies and/or elected officials to continue seeking solutions for the problems identified.

Scholarships for John Jay Students



Photo credits: Joe Rydell

The Park Slope Civic Council awarded Community Service Scholarships to four remarkable high school students at the May 4, 2023 trustee meeting at the Old Stone House. The recipients of the college scholarships are graduating seniors attending the four high schools within the John Jay Educational Complex. Each student exemplified an impressive level of volunteer and community service. The students each received a \$2,500 scholarship to assist them with their post-secondary education.

Scholarships were awarded to (from left to right, above) Bryant Rojas from the Cyber Arts Studio Academy, Tata Chelidze from Park Slope Collegiate, Daniel Tyler-Zimmerman from Millennium Brooklyn High School, and Keturah Allen from John Jay School for Law. Mr. Rojas will attend Brooklyn College, Ms. Chelidze will attend Stony Brook University, Mr. Tyler-Zimmerman will attend Purchase College, and Ms. Allen will attend Mount Holyoke College.

The Community Service Scholarships are funded through the Park Slope Civic Council's food and drink tasting fundraising event, Food For Thought. Food for Thought will be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at the Picnic House in Prospect Park.

Lovgren Awards Presented

At the May 4 meeting, the Park Slope Civic Council honored the winners of this year's Lovgren Award, which recognizes people or organizations for their outstanding service to the Park Slope community. The award is named for George Lovgren, the Park Slope activist who in the 1960s worked to save the Union Street Firehouse from closing.

Lauri Schindler (at right, with PSCC President Timothy Gilles) has been a member of the New York Presbyterian, Brooklyn Methodist Hospital Community Council for over a dozen years. During her two complete, nine-year terms as a Trustee of the Park Slope Civic Council, where she's been Vice President and Executive Committee member for many years, Lauri has put her hand in the air to volunteer for just about every committee and event that came along.



Photo credit: Judy Antell

Good Neighbors of Park Slope, a nonprofit organization founded in 2014, helps Park Slope residents age in place. In October, Good Neighbors brought the issue of e-bike safety to our attention and became helpful and effective collaborators in the e-bike survey reported on in this issue.

Photo credit: Judy Antell



Good Neighbors is dedicated to enabling older adults to live independent, healthy, purposeful lives. Their activities include social events, advocacy and social activism, resource and information sharing, community resources for older people, and more.

Joyce Jed, (pictured above) president of Good Neighbors of Park Slope, and a PSCC member, accepted the Lovgren Award on behalf of the organization.

Earth Day Civic Sweep

Photo credit: Tiff Ziter



Trustee Christina Gutiérrez-Williams demonstrates how to use a trash picker.

The Park Slope Civic Council hosted its annual Spring Civic Sweep on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22. More than 40 volunteers helped us clean our neighborhood by picking up trash and removing graffiti. We filled over 20 trash bags.

Thanks to Old Stone House, DSNY & Park Slope Trash Club. Stay tuned for our fall for Civic Sweep!

Ortner Award Given

The Park Slope United Methodist Church received the 2023 Evelyn and Everett Ortner Preservation Award for its construction of a new far more accessible entrance to the church and connection to its attractive adjacent garden. The Church was founded in 1884, the 1915 building is at the corner of 8th Street and 6th Avenue.



At the April 4 Park Slope Civic Council's meeting, Deirdre McDermott, Partner, accepted the award on behalf of Future Expansion Architects, a Park Slope-based architectural firm.

The addition, completed last year, employs a contemporary design with a new and far more accessible sidewalk level entrance. The new daylight addition provides wide stairways, space for meetings and an integrated wheelchair lift.

By making the building more accessible, its new main entrance has made the church more aligned with its mission and philosophy.



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and help us to

Sustain the Relevance, Viability and History of This Community We Call Home.

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