**Paragraph – Biking**

**An Unexpected eBike Boom that Begs Many Questions**

2020 has been a hugely tumultuous year for the world and for e-bikes too. March 16th has been tagged as ‘the week the world shut down’ with what seemed at the time as dire consequences for the majority of industries. However, with many countries declaring bike shops as essential service and allowed to stay open, and city authorities soon putting place [**cycle-friendly measures**](https://www.denverpost.com/2020/04/03/denver-streets-closed-coronavirus-covid/) in place to encourage cycling as a means of socially distanced transport and lockdown exercise things began to change as far as e-bikes were concerned. They represented just one small but vital tool in helping societies around the globe to keep healthy and keep functioning in dire and tragic circumstances.

Bike and e-bike use rocketed and led to shortages in shops whilst city streets were deserted of motor traffic at the height of the lockdown; for example motorized trips dropped by some 80% in Los Angeles since the March restrictions were announced. Air quality saw an[**unprecedented leap in quality**](https://www.thedrive.com/news/32664/at-least-air-quality-is-much-much-better-with-everyone-in-quarantine). In major cities the Covid crisis acted as a spur for major investment. Across Europe more than 1 billion euros has been spent and more than 1400 miles of cycle lane created. Here are some of the major infrastructure developments from around the globe in 2020:

* Paris and the surrounding Ile-de-France [**pumped €300 million into cycle projects**](https://www.cyclist.co.uk/news/8078/paris-pumps-300m-into-cycling-infrastructure-during-coronavirus), with plans for over 400 miles of cycle way some classed as temporary – by September the plans [**had become permanent**](https://www.france24.com/en/20200916-paris-to-keep-new-cycling-paths-beyond-pandemic)and by December [**plans were in motion**](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/12/paris-parking-spaces-greenery-cities/) to remove 140,000 car parking spaces in the city to replace them with greener alternatives including bike parking.
* Milan, Italy announced €115m to stimulate cycling. The government has pledged subsidies of up to €500 if citizens want to buy a new bike or an e-scooter in a bid to keep people off public transport and out of cars.
* Houston, Texas [**recently announced** i](https://thetexan.news/houston-mayor-moves-forward-with-vision-zero-plan-aiming-to-end-traffic-fatalities/)ts Vision Zero plan for transport aiming for 50 miles of sidewalks and 25 miles of high-comfort bikeways each year for the next ten years. The Zero refers to the aim of reducing road fatalities to zero (though a note of caution is sounded by[**this Bloomberg article)**](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-21/vision-zero-are-cities-reducing-traffic-deaths). Another 2020 infrastructure success – small but notable – was NYC’s Jackson Heights beautiful tree-lined 34th Avenue becoming an ‘open street’ to allow more social distancing, allow people to get some exercise and have better mental health. Now that the open street runs for 1.3 miles every day from 8am to 8pm, you will see children, families, exercisers, seniors and people using it that need to shop & run vital errands

For a roundup of European pro-bike developments check out this informative [**BBC article**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54353914)or check out the film below. It gives a flavour of the success e-bikes have been enjoying. To give one example Taco Carlier said his electric bike brand VanMoof sold more bikes in the first four months of 2020 than it did in the previous two years.

By July motor travel was returning but the bike and e-bike boom continued and e-bikes continued to be in short supply for the rest of the year. No doubt supplies will normalise but the big question for the continued success of e-bikes continues to be will the new cycle lanes be kept and will more be built; all the evidence suggests that once cyclists feel safe cycling they will arrive in droves.

Cyclist friendly roundabouts like the one below in Cambridge, UK are everywhere in the Netherlands but this is a first for the UK and caused quite a stir.

So the big question heading into 2021 is will the momentum for more bike infrastructure and more pro-bike measures continue. Certainly many members of the[**C40 Cities group**](https://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force)have recognised the need for change and many seem determined to push it through. The post-Covid recovery, in the eyes of many of the world’s major cities, it seems is[**inseparable from tackling climate change**](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/11/paris-climate-agreement-54-cities-on-track-to-meet-targets) and promoting light electric vehicles like the e-bike.

Source: <https://electricbikereport.com/>