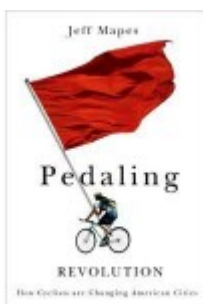


# A book for those planning, building bike paths

By Kathryn Reed

“We would no more build a system for the bicycle that ends every few blocks than we would build an arterial for motor vehicles that detoured traffic every 800 meters.”

That is from a 1999 paper written by two employees of the city of Davis. It was reprinted in the book “Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities” by Jeff Mapes. I bought the book last year when it came out thinking it might provide me insight into what other areas are doing in regards to human powered two-wheelers.



I am amazed at how other places in the United States and the world are trying to understand bicyclists and saddened Lake Tahoe planners don't embrace the philosophy of the quote above.

The need for connectivity was illustrated time and again. It's a word local planners use but those of us on bikes know doesn't exist much in Tahoe.

Mapes is a reporter for the *Oregonian* newspaper in Portland who took time to explore the cycling culture beyond his back yard.

He talks about Amsterdam. He talks about Davis. He talks about New York City. He talks about the suburbs.

What makes this book worth reading is that he experienced what he wrote about – it wasn't just a bunch of interviews. He delved into some of the history of cycling, where it is today,

and where it might be going.

It is dry, though. This isn't one of those fun travel books. It's not a fun book. And it will never fall into the travel genre. In fact, it took me a long time to read the 274-page paperback. Still, though, it's one of those books that is worth reading for anyone who has anything to do with planning that involves cyclists and for anyone who wants to change the way their town or region is connected.

"Pedaling Revolution" shows what can be done when people work cooperatively.

It's amazing that just 100 miles away in Davis that town "helped pioneer traffic signals that were sensitive enough to be activated by cyclists and, at one problematic intersection, a green-light phase for cyclists only."

A study was done in 2006 in Portland that found bicycle related businesses generate \$63 million a year. But an economist from there told the book's author, "The larger point was that bicycling allowed residents to save vastly larger sums of money."

A resident of Oregon is quoted as saying, "My wife and I often sit out in front and have a cocktail and watch the bikes go by. I guess I like looking at bikes more than cars."

Clearly, that sentiment is not embraced by Tahoe-ites who block access to trails.

Mapes has found congestion in cities is leading the push to create a more congenial cycling atmosphere. But there have been setbacks. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion in Manhattan by establishing an \$8 surcharge on some motorists.

"By April of 2008, however, congestion pricing was dead. It was killed by Democrats in the state assembly engaged in a

Byzantine political war with Bloomberg and responding to opposition from motor-vehicle commuters in the suburbs and outlying neighborhoods of the city," Mapes writes.

The book also points out feeling unsafe is the No. 1 reason people don't get on a bike.

"As long ago as 1996, the U.S. surgeon general, in a landmark report on physical activity, said 53 percent of people who had cycled in the previous year said they would commute to work by bike if they could do so on 'safe separated designated paths'."

Amen.

Two other passages that stuck with me are: "In America, we spend more on dental research than traffic safety research." And "... we don't even like to own up to the full toll of automotive mayhem, which is the equivalent of two jumbo jetliners crashing every week and killing everyone aboard."