Webcasts Help

Construction DIVE

STAY INFORMED

Get a daily email with the latest news

about green building, design, commercial,

residential, deals, regulations and more.

Enter your work email address

Subscribe

Inflation pressures drive year-overyear spike in construction material

Eye in the sky: 5 commercial drone

Triax Technologies develops belt clip to track, report worker safety

Caterpillar, Scope AR partner to bring remote repair to the job site

Seattle bridge designed to bounce

back after earthquakes

trends for construction

Learn more about the newsletter

● Construction DIVE

LATEST NEWS

BRIEF

prices

BRIEF

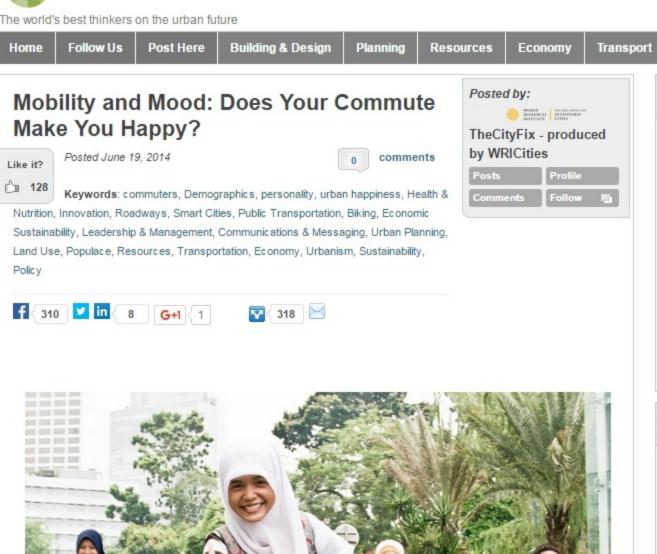
BRIEF

data

BRIEF

BRIEF





In a new study on the connection between mood and transport, bicyclists were found to be the happiest, give one more reason to choose sustainable mobility. Photo by Onny Carr/Flickr.

There is a complex connection between the environments we inhabit and the way we feel. For instance, urban physicists have studied how rain and wind influence walking patterns, environmental psychologists have researched how the presence of nature influences well-being, and urban designers have studied how street design can create safety and social closeness.

But, until earlier this month, people only had a hazy, individual idea of how they felt while using different mobility modes. Now, Eric Morris from Clemson University and Erick Guerra from the University of Pennsylvania have published a study in the journal Transportation entitled "Mood and Mode: Does how we travel affect how we feel?". The study looks at how levels of stress, fatigue, pain, and happine vary across users of different transport types.

While their research has found some important connections between biking and happiness, the true strength of this approach is that it rests as a foundation for city leaders to ask bold new questions about the relationship between the built environment and quality of life.

## Bicycling brings happiness

Morris and Guerra used data collected by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics as part of the American Time Use Survey, pulling from 13,000 respondents. The transport modes included in the survey were bicycling, walking, driving in a car as a passenger, driving in a car as a driver, and using bus and rail transport.

The data revealed that those who bike are by far the happiest, with passengers in cars second, followed by drivers in cars. Passengers on buses and trains ranked as the least happy.

The conclusions for bicycling are clear: cyclists tend to be happier than people who use other means of transport. This finding is good news for bike advocates and city planners, for along with the environmental and health benefits often cited as reasons to bike, adding happiness to the list is powerful. It also seems to be a simple conclusion, for physical activity releases serotonin, the "happiness hormone." Yet, Morris called for caution in fully trusting these initial results, as "bicyclists are generally younger and physically healthy, which are traits that happier people usually possess." So, while cyclists might be the happiest travelers, it isn't yet clear that they are happy solely because they're biking.

## Changing the course for transport investment

Although further research is necessary to develop a clearer sense of precisely how mobility options influence emotion, the potential for what this might mean for transport investment is already exciting. Said Morris: "Understanding the relationship between how we travel and how we feel offers insight into ways of improving existing transportation services, prioritizing investments and theorizing and modeling the costs and benefits of travel."

Improving the emotional experience of how people move might be as important as investing in traditional infrastructure or traditional advocacy campaigns to get people to choose sustainable transport. If it were possible to redesign the experience of bus travel to make it as pleasurable as driving, would it be possible to entice those still adamant about car transport? If it were possible to chart a route in Google Maps that gives not the quickest but the most enjoyable trip, would it radically alter mobility patterns?

For now, these are simply questions. But exploring the link between mood and transport encourages a shift in how we build our cities, moving from traditional ideas of passenger flows and route times as the markers of a successful transport system, to a much more nuanced and holistic conception of success that incorporates user experience and enjoyment.

This article is inspired by TheCityFix Brasil's "Pedalar para ser feliz no trânsito" by Priscila Kichler Pacheco.

Login or register to post comments



Urban Planning "Games" A Novel Approach to an Old Problem - July 18, 2016

Beyond Emissions: 5 Cities Achieve Social and Economic Development by Reducing GHG Emissions from Transport - May 20, 2016

The Rise of the Urban Energy "Prosumer" - May 17, 2016

What Can We Learn from Thailand's Inclusive Approach to Upgrading Informal Settlements? -May 12, 2016

4 Surprising Ways Energy-Efficient Buildings Benefit Cities - May 11, 2016

Portland, OR voters green light \$258M affordable housing measure

November 15, 2016 by Construction Dive

November 11, 2016 by Ivan Bruce Tesla announces plans to build second gigafactory

Urbanization in Nigeria: Planning for the Unplanned

November 11, 2016 by Construction Dive

Finding our way together in an unpredictable future

November 10, 2016 by Joe Nickol

How a bit of kindness can help the homeless and the environment in Hong Kong November 7, 2016 by willing

Sustainable Cities Public Transit Urbanism

Urban Farming Green Building Green Infrastructure

Urban Design Urban Sustainability Urban Sprawl

Placemaking Waste Management Construction News

