

CHAPTER 1

Breaking into bicycle theft: Insights from Montreal, Canada

INTRODUCTION

Planners and transportation specialists are aiming to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in an attempt to promote urban futures that are not heavily reliant on the personal automobile. Many cities have adopted policies that promote active modes of transportation such as walking and cycling due to their positive environmental, economic, health and social benefits (Dill, 2009; Gordon-Larsen, Nelson, & Beam, 2005). While much of the recent research in active transportation aims to understand cyclists' experience and satisfaction with the built environment, few studies evaluate their opinions about the security and availability of bicycle parking facilities. Facilitating an increase in bicycle mode share requires planning both terminals (parking facilities) and cycling networks (paths and lanes). This research aims to better understand bicycle theft and tries to fill the gap concerning the safety and availability of bicycle parking facilities. As bicycles become a more popular form of transportation, planners and transportation researchers will need to consider how to create urban spaces that encourage cycling and discourage bicycle theft.

This paper recognizes that a major concern for cyclists is bicycle theft and therefore seeks to answer five basic questions: 1) *who* are the victims of bicycle theft; 2) *where* does bicycle theft occur most frequently, and where is it perceived to occur most frequently; 3) *what* kinds of bicycles are most commonly stolen; 4) *how* are bicycles most commonly stolen; and 5) *when* are bicycles most likely to be stolen; as well as examining trends. The data for this research is a result of a detailed online survey conducted in Montreal, Quebec, Canada specifically for this purpose. The survey included demographic, travel and parking behavior, theft history, and spatial questions to better understand the factors influencing bicycle theft in Montreal. Although the paper answers specific questions in relation to bicycle theft in the Montreal region, transportation planners and engineers in other cities can benefit from the findings as it gives some insights about the nature of bicycle theft as well as the attitudes of cyclists towards this issue.