

Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany

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Abstract

This paper shows how the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have made bicycling a safe, convenient, and practical way to get around their cities. The analysis relies on national aggregate data as well as case studies of large and small cities in each country. The key to achieving high levels of cycling appears to be the provision of separate cycling facilities along heavily traveled roads and at intersections, combined with traffic calming of most residential neighborhoods. Extensive cycling rights of way in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany are complemented by ample bike parking, full integration with public transport, comprehensive traffic education and training of both cyclists and motorists, and a wide range of promotional events intended to generate enthusiasm and wide public support for cycling. In addition to their many pro-bike policies and programs, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany make driving expensive as well as inconvenient in central cities through a host of taxes and restrictions on car ownership, use, and parking. Moreover, strict land use policies foster compact, mixed-use developments that generate shorter and thus more bikeable trips. It is the coordinated implementation of this multi-faceted, mutually reinforcing set of policies that best explains the success of these three countries in promoting cycling. For comparison, the paper portrays the marginal status of cycling in the UK and USA, where only about one percent of trips are by bike.

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This paper shows how the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have made bicycling a safe, convenient, and practical way to get around their cities. The analysis relies on national aggregate data as well as case studies of large and small cities in each country. The key to achieving high levels of cycling appears to be the provision of separate cycling facilities along heavily traveled roads and at intersections, combined with traffic calming of most residential neighborhoods. Extensive cycling rights of way in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany are complemented by ample bike parking, full integration with public transport, comprehensive traffic education and training of both cyclists and motorists, and a wide range of promotional events intended to generate enthusiasm and wide public support for cycling. In addition to their many pro-bike policies and programs, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany make driving expensive as well as inconvenient in central cities through a host of taxes and restrictions on car ownership, use, and parking. Moreover, strict land use policies foster compact, mixed-use developments that generate shorter and thus more bikeable trips. It is the coordinated implementation of this multi-faceted, mutually reinforcing set of policies that best explains the success of these three countries in promoting cycling. For comparison, the paper portrays the marginal status of cycling in the UK and USA, where only about one percent of trips are by bike.

Introduction

For readers in many countries, the title of this paper might sound so impossible as to seem absurd. Most Britons and Americans, for example, must find cycling quite resistible indeed, since they make only about one percent of their trips by bike. Cycling conditions in most countries—including the UK and USA—are anything but safe, convenient, and attractive (Tolley 2003; McClintock, 2002; Pucher and Dijkstra, 2003; Pucher et al, 1999). Bicycling in much of the industrialized world is a marginal mode of transport, occasionally used for recreational

purposes but rarely used for practical, everyday travel needs. Moreover, the social distribution of cycling tends to be very uneven, with young men doing most of the cycling, while women cycle far less, and the elderly hardly cycle at all.

Thus, it may come as a surprise to skeptical readers that there are technologically advanced, affluent countries that have managed to make cycling a mainstream mode of transport, a perfectly normal way to get around cities. In the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, cycling levels are more than ten times higher than in the UK and USA. Dutch, German, and Danish women cycle as often as men, and rates of cycling fall only slightly with age. Moreover, cycling is distributed evenly across all income groups. In the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, cycling is truly for everyone and for all trip purposes.

Moreover, cycling in those countries is not viewed as requiring expensive equipment, advanced training, or a high degree of physical fitness. Nor are cyclists forced to muster the courage and willingness to battle motor vehicles on streets without separate bike lanes or paths. On the contrary, Dutch, German, and Danish cyclists ride on simple, inexpensive bikes, almost never wear special cycling outfits, and rarely use safety helmets. Even timid, risk-averse, and safety-conscious individuals can be found cycling, unlike the many millions of Americans and Britons who are terrified by the mere thought of getting on a bike.

As documented in this article, cycling was not always thriving in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark. Cycling levels plummeted in all three countries from about 1950 to 1975 (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006). It was only through a massive reversal in transport and urban planning policies in the mid 1970s that cycling was revived to its current successful state. In 1950, cycling levels were higher in the UK than they are now in Germany: almost 15% of all trips. Just as in these other countries, cycling in the UK plummeted from 1950 to 1975, but

British cycling never recovered. It continued to fall to its current level of 1.3% of trips, only slightly higher than the 0.9% bike share of trips in the USA (Department for Transport, 2007; U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003).

While history, culture, topography, and climate are important, they do not necessarily determine the fate of cycling. Government policies are at least as important: transport policies, land use policies, urban development policies, housing policies, environmental policies, taxation policies, and parking policies. In many respects, the UK and USA have given the green light to the private car, almost regardless of its economic, social, and environmental costs. In sharp contrast, cycling has prospered in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark over the past three decades precisely because these countries have given the red light, or at least the yellow warning light, to private cars. Instead of catering to ever more motor vehicles by expanding roadways and parking facilities, Dutch, German, and Danish cities have focused on serving people, making their cities people-friendly rather than car-friendly, and thus more livable and more sustainable than American, British, and Australian cities.

There are many good reasons to encourage more cycling. It causes virtually no noise or air pollution and consumes far less nonrenewable resources than any motorized transport mode. The only energy cycling requires is provided directly by the traveler, and the very use of that energy offers valuable cardiovascular exercise. Cycling requires only a small fraction of the space needed for the use and parking of cars. Moreover, cycling is economical, costing far less than both the private car and public transport, both in direct user costs and public infrastructure costs. Precisely because it is affordable by virtually everyone, cycling is among the most equitable of all transport modes. In short, it is hard to beat cycling when it comes to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Consequently, both the European Union and

the United States have officially recognized the importance of cycling as a practical mode of urban transport and endorse the dual objectives of raising cycling levels while increasing cycling safety (European Conference of the Ministers of Transport, 2004; U.S. Department of Transportation, 1994 and 2004).

As shown in this paper, countries vary greatly in the degree to which these stated objectives have been met. The Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have been at the forefront of policies to make cycling safe, convenient, and attractive, while the UK and USA have lagged far behind. Differences between these countries in cycling levels are enlightening because all five of them are democratic, capitalist, affluent societies with nearly universal car ownership. The success of cycling does not depend on poverty, dictatorial regimes, or the lack of motorized transport options to force people onto bikes. This paper shows how the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have managed to make cycling a popular, mainstream way of getting around cities.

First, however, we document differences among countries in their overall levels of cycling, in bike trip purposes, and in the gender, age, and income levels of cyclists. Differences in cycling safety explain some of the difference in cycling levels among countries; thus, the paper contains an entire section with comparisons of cycling fatality and injury rates and trends over time. Subsequent sections summarize the range of policies and programs used in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany to promote cycling by a broad spectrum of society and at the same time improve cycling safety. The paper concludes with an overall assessment of the lessons that can be learned from these countries to make cycling safer, more convenient, and more attractive in other countries as well.

Variations among Countries in Overall Cycling Levels

As shown in Figure 1, there are large differences between Australia, the United States, Canada, and European countries in the bike share of trips, ranging from a low of 1% in Australia, the UK, and the USA to 27% in the Netherlands. These differences in the bike share of trips roughly parallel differences in the average distance cycled per person per day, an alternative way of measuring and comparing cycling levels among countries. Averaging over the entire population of each country, the European Conference of the Ministers of Transport (2004) estimated that per capita cycling per day ranges from 0.1 km in Spain, Greece, and Portugal to 2.5 km in the Netherlands (see Figure 2). Denmark (1.6 km) and Germany (0.9 km) immediately follow the Netherlands in distance cycled per inhabitant. The USA and UK are both at the low end of the spectrum, averaging 0.1 km and 0.2 km of cycling per person per day, respectively.

These national averages hide large variations in cycling levels between cities within each country, as shown in Figure 3. With only a few exceptions, however, even the most bike-oriented cities in the UK, Australia, Canada, and USA generally have bike shares of travel that are lower than the least bike-oriented cities in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. No British, Canadian, Australian, or American city even approaches the bike share of trips for most Dutch and Danish cities. Only a few German cities have bike mode shares lower than 5%, while all Canadian, Australian, and American cities, and most British cities, have bike shares that low.

These statistics on cycling levels reflect data from national ministries of transport, central statistical bureaus, and supplementary city travel surveys. They are not entirely comparable because travel surveys vary somewhat according to variable definitions, data collection method and frequency, target population, sample size, and response rates (Kunert et al., 2002). At the very least, however, such travel surveys facilitate approximate comparisons of different levels of

cycling among countries and cities, and whatever their limitations, they are the best available sources of information.

One might expect that Europeans cycle more than Americans due to shorter trip lengths in European cities. Indeed, a considerably higher percentage of all trips in European cities are shorter than 2.5 km: 44% in the Netherlands, 37% in Denmark, and 41% in Germany, compared to 27% in the USA (Statistics Netherlands, 2007; National Statistical Office of Denmark, 2005; German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2003; U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003). In the UK, only 30% of trips are shorter than 2.5 km, much closer to the American level, perhaps due to more extensive sprawl in Britain than in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany (Department for Transport, 2007).

Even controlling for trip distance, however, the Dutch, Danes, and Germans make a much higher percentage of their local trips by bike. As shown in Figure 4, both Americans and Britons cycle for only 2% of their trips shorter than 2.5km, compared to 37% in the Netherlands, 27% in Denmark, and 14% in Germany. That pattern also holds for the progressively longer trip distance categories shown in Figure 4. For trips between 2.5km and 4.4km, for example, Americans and Britons make just 1% of their trips by bike, compared to much higher bike mode shares for the same trip distance in the Netherlands (37%), Denmark (24%), and Germany (11%).

Northern Europeans—even Britons—are far more likely than Americans to cycle for practical, utilitarian purposes. Travel to work or school accounts for only 11% of all bike trips in the USA, compared to 28% in Germany, 30% in the UK, 32% in the Netherlands, and 35% in Denmark. Even more strikingly, shopping trips account for only 5% of all bike trips in the USA, compared to 20% in Germany, 22% in the Netherlands, and 25% in Denmark (Department for

started spreading out. From 1950 to 1975, the bike share of trips fell by roughly two-thirds in a sample of Dutch, Danish, and German cities, from 50-85% of trips in 1950 to only 14-35% of trips in 1975 (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006). Similarly, a study by the City of Berlin (2003) found that the number of bike trips there fell by 78% from 1950 to 1975. During that 25-year period, cities throughout the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany focused on accommodating and facilitating increased car use by vastly expanding roadway capacity and parking supply, while largely ignoring the needs of pedestrians and cyclists (Hass-Klau, 1990).

In the mid-1970s, transport and land use policies in all three countries shifted dramatically to favor walking, cycling, and public transport over the private car. The policy reform was a reaction to the increasingly harmful environmental, energy, and safety impacts of rising car use (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; European Conference of the Ministers of Transport, 2004; Pucher, 1997; Hass-Klau, 1990). Most cities improved their bicycling infrastructure while imposing restrictions on car use and making it more expensive. That policy reversal led to turnarounds in the previous decline of bike use. From 1975 to 1995, the bicycling share of trips in the same, previously cited sample of Dutch, Danish, and German cities rose by roughly a fourth, resulting in 1995 bike shares of 20-43%. In Berlin, the total number of bike trips nearly quadrupled from 1975 to 2001 (increasing by 275%), reaching 45% of the 1950 bicycling level (City of Berlin, 2003). The rebound in cycling from 1975 onward was not enough to offset the huge declines from 1950 to 1975. Nevertheless, it was a significant accomplishment and provides evidence of the powerful impact of policy on travel behavior. It is especially impressive given continuing growth in per-capita income, car ownership and suburban development in all three countries over the past three decades.

The Netherlands and the UK provide striking contrasts in their long-term cycling trends (see Figure 6). Over the period 1952 to 1975, cycling in the UK fell by 80%, compared to a drop of 62% in the Netherlands. Cycling in both countries rebounded somewhat during the ten years from 1975 to 1985. In the next 20 years, however, cycling resumed its long-term decline in the UK, whereas cycling levels continued to increase in the Netherlands. The overall result is that by 2006, the cycling level in the UK was less than a seventh of its 1952 level (13%), while cycling in the Netherlands was at slightly more than half of its 1952 level (52%).

Analysis of nationwide aggregate data for the past few decades confirms a rebound in cycling in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany since the 1970s. As shown in Figure 7, average daily kilometers cycled per inhabitant rose in all three countries from 1978 to 2005: from 0.6 to 1.0 in Germany, from 1.3 to 1.6 in Denmark, and from 1.7 to 2.5 in the Netherlands. In both the Netherlands and Denmark, the strongest growth in cycling was from the mid 1970s until the early 1990s. By comparison, average daily kilometers cycled in the UK have fallen almost continuously since 1978, declining by a third: from 0.25 to 0.18.

Not only do the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have high and growing levels of cycling, but their cyclists comprise virtually all segments of society (see Figure 8). Women are just about as likely to cycle as men, making 45% of all bike trips in Denmark, 49% in Germany, and 55% in the Netherlands. While cycling is gender-neutral in those three countries, men dominate cycling in the UK and USA, where they make 72% and 76% of all bike trips, respectively.

Another dimension of cycling’s universality in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany is the representation of all age groups. Children and adolescents have the highest rates of cycling in almost every country. As shown in Figure 9, however, cycling levels in the Netherlands,

Denmark, and Germany remain high even among the elderly. In Germany, the bike share of trips rises steadily from 7% among 18-24-year-olds to 12% for those 65 and older. The bike share of trips declines with age in Denmark, but even among those aged 70-74 years old, cycling accounts for 12% of all trips, the same as among Germans who are 65 and older. The Dutch elderly double that percentage, making 24% of all their trips by bike.

Cycling rates are low for all age groups in the USA, but they also decline with age: from 3.2% among children 5-15 years old to only 0.4% of trips for those 40 and older (see Figure 9). Similarly, the bike share of trips falls from 2% among British children to 1% among older age groups. The bike share of trips for the Dutch elderly is 24 times higher than for British elderly and 60 times higher than for American elderly. The bike share of trips for both the German and Danish elderly is 12 times higher than for British elderly and 30 times higher than for American elderly.

Rates of cycling are similar across different income classes, not only in the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, but also in the UK and USA (Danish Ministry of Transport, 2007; Statistics Netherlands, 2007; Department for Transport, 2006; German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2003; U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003). In the Netherlands, Germany and the UK, low-income groups cycle only slightly more than high-income groups. By comparison, the poor in the USA cycle for a slightly lower percentage of their trips than the affluent, but the difference is negligible (0.8% vs. 0.9%). Thus, cycling appears to be the most equitable of all transport modes, at least in terms of usage across income classes.

The remainder of this article examines how Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark have succeeded in making cycling a safe and convenient way to get around their cities.

Trends in Cycling Safety

Perhaps the most important reason for the higher levels of cycling in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany—especially among women, children, and the elderly—is that cycling is much safer there than in the USA and the UK. Both fatality and injury rates are much higher for cyclists in the USA and the UK than in Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Averaged over the years 2002 to 2005, the number of bicyclist fatalities per 100 million km cycled was 5.8 in the USA and 3.6 in the UK, compared to 1.7 in Germany, 1.5 in Denmark, and 1.1 in the Netherlands (see Figure 10). Thus, cycling is over five times as safe in the Netherlands as in the USA and more than three times as safe as in the UK. That might explain why the Dutch do not perceive cycling as a dangerous way to get around. Cycling in Germany and Denmark is not quite as safe as in the Netherlands, but it is 3-4 times safer than in the USA and twice as safe as in the UK.

Serious cycling injuries outnumber cycling fatalities roughly ten-fold in most countries (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007). Thus, it is important to consider non-fatal injury rates as well. Figure 10 compares non-fatal injury rates per 10 million km cycled side by side with fatality rates per 100 million km cycled. For all five countries, these statistics rely on police reports. Without exception, the cycling safety ranking for countries is the same for injuries as for fatalities. Thus, the Netherlands has the lowest non-fatal injury rate as well as the lowest fatality rate, while the USA has the highest non-fatal injury rate as well as the highest fatality rate. Indeed, the non-fatal injury rate for the USA is about eight times higher than for Germany and about 30 times higher than for the Netherlands and Denmark. The injury rate in the UK is second highest, but much lower than in the USA.

The cyclist injury rate for the USA seems extremely high relative to the other countries. Yet it vastly underestimates total cycling injuries. It only includes cycling injuries resulting from crashes with motor vehicles on roadways and reported by the police (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2007). By comparison, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2007), the official public health agency of the U.S. Government, reports ten times more cycling injuries per year (479,963 vs. 45,000 in 2005), based on reports from emergency rooms of hospitals. As documented by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2007), the official statistics of other countries also underestimate total cyclist injuries to varying degrees. The documented 10-fold underreporting in the USA highlights the poor and variable quality of data on cycling injuries.

There are always problems comparing injury statistics across different countries because of differences in definitions and methodologies of data collection (Pucher and Dijkstra, 2000 and 2003). Whether a cycling injury is reported in official statistics depends on the type of injury, where it occurs, whether it involves a motor vehicle, and whether it requires emergency medical assistance or a hospital visit. Many, if not most, cycling injuries are not reported at all. Even serious cycling injuries are underreported, as shown by the American case. Thus, the cycling injury rates reported in Figure 10 are less accurate and less comparable than the corresponding fatality rates. Nevertheless, both measures indicate much safer cycling in the Netherlands and Denmark than in the UK and the USA, with Germany in between.

As shown in Figure 11, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands have greatly improved cycling safety since 1970. Although levels of cycling have increased in all three countries over the past 35 years (as already shown in Figure 7), the total number of cycling fatalities has declined by over 70%. Fatalities fell by 60% in the UK over the same period, but the amount of

cycling also decreased. The least improvement in cycling safety has been in the USA, where fatalities fell by only 30%.

Longer-term data are available for the Netherlands. They dramatically portray the strong relationship between cycling safety and levels of cycling (see Figure 12). During the 1950s and 1960s, car use rose rapidly in the Netherlands. Insufficient supply of both roadways and separate cycling facilities generated dangerous traffic conflicts and an alarming increase in cycling fatalities (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; Netherlands Ministry of Transport, 2006). As the cyclist fatality rate per billion km cycled rose by 174% from 1950 to 1978, the average km cycled per inhabitant fell by 65%. Since the mid-1970s, Dutch cities have undertaken massive improvements to cycling infrastructure and restricted car use (Netherlands Ministry of Transport, 1999 and 2006). The result has been an 81% fall in the cyclist fatality rate from 1978 to 2006, thus encouraging a 36% increase in km cycled per inhabitant. This statistical relationship, of course, does not prove causation, but there is every reason to believe that increased safety is a key to promoting more cycling (Rietveld and Daniel, 2004).

There is also reason to believe that more cycling facilitates safer cycling. The phenomenon of ‘safety in numbers’ has consistently been found to hold over time and across cities and countries. Fatality rates per trip and per km are much lower for countries and cities with high bicycling shares of total travel, and fatality rates fall for any given country or city as cycling levels rise (Jacobsen, 2003).

Most surveys show that the perceived traffic danger of cycling is an important deterrent to more widespread cycling (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; Noland, 1994). Women and the elderly appear to be especially sensitive to such traffic danger. Many American parents do not allow their children to cycle for the same reason. As shown in Figure 10, cycling in the USA is

indeed dangerous in comparison with other countries. Thus, making cycling safer is surely one of the keys to increasing overall cycling levels in the USA, particularly among women, the elderly, and children.

In the USA, much of the effort to improve cyclist safety has focused on increasing helmet use, if necessary by law, especially for children. Thus, it is important to emphasize that the much safer cycling in northern Europe is definitely *not* due to widespread use of safety helmets. On the contrary, in the Netherlands, with the safest cycling of any country, less than one percent of adult cyclists wear helmets, and even among children, only 3-5% wear helmets (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; Netherlands Ministry of Transport, 2006). The Dutch cycling experts and planners interviewed for this paper adamantly opposed the use of helmets, claiming that helmets discourage cycling by making it less convenient, less comfortable, and less fashionable. They also mention the possibility that helmets would make cycling more dangerous by giving cyclists a false sense of safety and thus encouraging riskier riding behavior. At the same time, helmets might reduce the consideration motorists give cyclists, since they might seem less vulnerable if wearing helmets (Walker, 2007).

German and Danish cycling planners seem far more supportive of increased helmet use, especially among children (Andersen, 2005; Boehme, 2005; City of Muenster, 2004; German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2002; Danish Ministry of Transport, 2000). There have been extensive promotional campaigns in these two countries to encourage more helmet use, but there are no laws requiring helmet use, not even for young children. In 2002, 33% of German children aged 6-10 years wore helmets while cycling, compared to 9% of adolescents aged 11-16, and 2% of Germans aged 17 or older. In 2006, 66% of Danish school children aged 6-10

wore helmets, compared to 12% among school children 11 years or older, and less than 5% among adults.

Government Roles in Funding and Planning Cycling Facilities and Programs in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany

Due to the mostly local, short-distance trips made by bike, policies and programs to promote safe and convenient cycling are usually carried out at the municipal level (European Conference of the Ministers of Transport, 2004). Local governments in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark have been planning, constructing, and funding bicycling facilities for many decades, at least since the 1970s but much earlier in some cities. Municipalities are responsible for making the specific plans that reflect the particular conditions and needs of the local context. Cycling training, safety, and promotional programs are usually carried out at the local level as well, even if they are mandated and funded by higher levels. At the intermediate level, states, counties, and regional governments provide additional policy guidance, coordination, and funding, as well as some direct planning and construction of cycling facilities that serve rural areas or provide links between municipalities.

Central government involvement in cycling has been more recent, evolving gradually since about 1980 and providing overall goals, design guidelines, research support, model projects, coordination, and funding. The Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany all have official National Bicycling Master Plans (German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2002; Danish Ministry of Transport, 2000; Netherlands Ministry of Transport, 1999). Each of these plans sets forth the overall goal of raising levels of cycling for daily travel while improving cycling safety. They also propose various strategies to achieve these dual goals: better design of lanes, paths, and intersections; more and better bike parking; coordination with public transport; and cycling safety and promotion campaigns. Although the Master Plans vary from one country to another,

they generally focus on the federal government’s role in fostering research, dissemination of best practice information, and funding and evaluation of a wide range of experimental, innovative projects.

Federal governments usually bear the cost of bicycling facilities built along national highways and contribute significantly to financing long-distance bicycling routes that cross state boundaries (European Conference of Ministers of Transport, 2004). In Germany, for example, the federal government contributed over €1.1 billion to doubling the extent of bikeways along federal highways from 1980 to 2000, and is now devoting €100 million per year for further bikeway extensions, cycling research, and demonstration projects. In addition, about €2 billion a year in revenues from the motor fuel tax are earmarked for a special urban transport investment fund, which provides 70-85% federal matching funds for state and local governments wanting to build cycling facilities (paths, lanes, bridges, traffic signals, signs, parking, etc.). From 1990 to 2006, the Dutch Central Government contributed an average of €60 million per year to various cycling projects, including €25 million per year specifically for bike parking at train stations. In addition, the Dutch Central Government provides €1.8 billion a year for provinces to spend on transport projects, including cycling facilities. By comparison, the Danish Central Government has no regular funding for cycling projects but since 2000 has contributed about €2 million a year to various demonstration projects.

The European Union (EU) has been playing a modest but increasing role in promoting cycling (European Conference of Ministry of Transport, 2004). Its Interreg program, for example, helps finance transnational and cross-border bikeway projects. That EU funding fits in nicely with the European Cyclists’ Federation’s (ECF) VeloEuro program to expand and integrate long-distance bicycling routes throughout Europe. The EU contributes toward the

funding of missing bike route connections between countries and of cycling facilities in underdeveloped regions. The EU also facilitates bicycling research and the exchange of best practice information among EU countries, just as national governments do this within each country.

How to Make Cycling Safe and Convenient

Many policies and programs are necessary to make cycling safe and feasible for a broad spectrum of the population. Table 1 summarizes seven categories of measures that have been widely adopted in Dutch, Danish and German cities. Their success in making cycling so appealing is largely attributable to the coordinated implementation of all of these measures, so that they reinforce the impact of each other in promoting cycling. Indeed, that is perhaps the key lesson to be learned: the necessity of a coordinated, multi-faceted approach.

Due to space limitations, we can only provide a few details to describe the nature and extent of the seven types of measures. The following discussion serves mainly to provide some representative examples of what Dutch, Danish, and German cities have been doing to raise cycling levels and make it safer. Most of the information cited below was provided directly to the authors by bicycling coordinators and planners in the ministries of transport of the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany and in two case study cities in each country (Amsterdam and Groningen; Copenhagen and Odense; Berlin and Muenster).

Bike Paths and Lanes. Especially from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, separate facilities such as bike paths and lanes expanded greatly in all three countries. In Germany, the bikeway network more than doubled in length, from 12,911km in 1976 to 31,236km in 1996 (German Federal Ministry of Transport, 1998). In the Netherlands, the bikeway network doubled in length, from 9,282km in 1978 to 18,948km in 1996 (Pucher and Dijkstra, 2000;

Statistics Netherlands, 1999). Nationwide, aggregate statistics for the period since the mid 1990s are not available, but data for individual cities suggest continued expansion, albeit at a much slower rate than previously. The main focus now appears to be on improving the specific design of cycle paths and lanes to improve safety.

In 2004, for example, Berlin (3.4 million inhabitants) had 860km of completely separate bike paths, 60km of bike lanes on streets, 50km of bike lanes on sidewalks, 100km of mixed-use pedestrian-bike paths, and 70km of combined bus-bike lanes on streets (City of Berlin, 2007). Amsterdam (735,000 inhabitants) and Copenhagen (504,000 inhabitants) each have roughly 400km of completely separate bike paths and lanes (City of Amsterdam, 2003a; City of Copenhagen, 2004). Even much smaller cities, however, have extensive cycling facilities. For example, there are 320km of bike paths and lanes in Muenster, Germany (278,000 inhabitants), over 500km in Odense, Denmark (185,000 inhabitants), and over 420km in Groningen, Netherlands (181,000) (City of Odense, 2007; Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; City of Muenster, 2004).

The bicycling networks in all these cities include numerous off-street short cut connections for cyclists between streets and traversing city blocks to enable them to take the most direct possible route from origin to destination. The result of such a wide range of facilities is a complete, integrated system of bicycling routes that permit cyclists to cover almost any trip either on completely separate paths and lanes or on lightly traveled, traffic-calmed residential streets.

Not only has the network of separate cycling facilities greatly expanded since the 1970s, but their design, quality, and maintenance have continually improved to ensure safer, more convenient, and more attractive cycling with each passing year. In addition, many cities in the

Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany have established a fully integrated system of directional signs for cyclists, color-coded to correspond to different types of bike routes. That system of signage often extends to entire regions, states, and even countries for long-distance routes (City of Muenster, 2007; Andersen, 2005; City of Copenhagen, 2002).

All large cities and most medium-sized cities in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany provide detailed maps of their cycling facilities. Some cities have recently introduced Internet bike route planning to assist cyclists in choosing the route that best serves their needs. In Berlin and Odense, for example, cyclists can enter their origin and destination as well as a range of personal preferences, such as speed, on-street or off-street facility, avoiding intersections and heavy traffic, etc. (City of Berlin, 2007; Andersen, 2005). The Internet program shows the optimal route on a map and provides all relevant information about time, average speed, bike parking, and public transport connections. This bike route planning is even possible while en route, using the LCD display of a mobile phone.

The provision of separate cycling facilities is undoubtedly the cornerstone of Dutch, Danish, and German policies to make cycling safe and attractive. They are designed to feel safe, comfortable, and convenient for both young and old, for women as well as men, and for all levels of cycling ability. Separate facilities are not sufficient but they are certainly necessary to ensure that cycling is possible for a broad spectrum of the population (Garrard et al., 2007).

Traffic Calming. It is neither possible nor necessary to provide separate bike paths and lanes on lightly traveled residential streets, but they constitute an important part of the overall cycling route network. Thus, Dutch, Danish, and German cities have traffic-calmed most streets in residential neighborhoods, reducing the legal speed limit to 30km/hr (19mph) and often prohibiting any through traffic. In addition, many cities—especially in the Netherlands—

introduced considerable alterations to the streets themselves, such as road narrowing, raised intersections and crosswalks, traffic circles, extra curves and zigzag routes, speed humps, and artificial deadends created by mid-block street closures. Cycling is almost always allowed in both directions on all such traffic-calmed streets, even when they are restricted to one-way travel for cars. That further enhances the flexibility of bike travel (City of Berlin, 2007; City of Groningen, 2007; City of Odense, 2007; Boehme, 2005).

The most advanced form of traffic calming—the “woonerf” or “home zone”—imposes even more restrictions, requiring cars to travel at walking speed. Pedestrians, cyclists, and playing children have as much right to use such residential streets as motor vehicles; indeed, motor vehicles are required to yield to non-motorized users.

In the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany, traffic calming is usually area-wide and not for isolated streets. That ensures that thru-traffic gets displaced to arterial roads designed to handle it and not simply shifted from one residential street to another.

Related to traffic calming, almost every city has created extensive car-free zones in their centers, mainly intended for pedestrian use but generally permitting cycling during off-peak hours (City of Muenster, 2004; City of Amsterdam, 2003b; City of Copenhagen, 2002). In some Dutch cities, these car-free zones specifically include cycling facilities such as bike lanes and parking (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006). The combination of traffic calming of residential streets and prohibition of cars in city centers makes it virtually impossible in some cities for cars to traverse the city center to get to the other side. Cars are forced to take various circumferential routes instead, thus mitigating the congestion, pollution, and safety problems they would cause in dense city centers.

Another kind of traffic calming is the so-called “bicycle street,” which has been increasingly adopted in Dutch and German cities. These are narrow streets where cyclists are given absolute traffic priority over the entire width of the street. On normal streets, cyclists are usually expected to keep as far to the curb (or lane of parked cars) as possible, so as not to interfere with motor vehicle traffic. On bicycling streets, however, cyclists can ride anywhere they want, even if that means obstructing cars. Cars are usually permitted to use the streets as well, but they are limited to 30km/hr (or less) and must yield to cyclists and give special consideration to avoid endangering them. In Muenster, for example, there were already 12 bicycling streets in 2007, and they have been so successful that the city has plans to add another 10 bicycling streets in the coming years (City of Muenster, 2007).

Traffic calmed residential neighborhoods, car-free city centers, and special bicycle streets all greatly enhance the overall bicycling network in Dutch, Danish, and German cities. Most importantly, they offer much safer, less stressful cycling than streets filled with fast-moving motor vehicles. Since most bike trips start at home, traffic calming of neighborhood streets is crucial to enabling bike trips to start off in a safe, pleasant environment on the way to the separate bike paths and lanes that serve the rest of the trip.

The available empirical evidence shows that traffic calming improves overall traffic safety. The benefits tend to be greatest for pedestrians, but serious cyclist injuries also fall sharply. Moreover, most studies report large increases in overall levels of walking and cycling. There are, of course, many different kinds of traffic calming. It is conceivable that one or another specific kind of traffic calming measure (perhaps roundabouts or speed humps) might detract from cycling safety in some circumstances. Overall, however, the evidence is overwhelming that traffic calming enhances both pedestrian and cyclist safety by reducing

speeds on secondary roads (Morrison et al., 2004; Transport for London, 2003; Webster et al., 1996; Herrstedt, 1992).

Intersection modifications. While bike paths and lanes help protect cyclists from exposure to traffic dangers between intersections, they can pose safety problems when crossing intersections. Thus, Dutch, Danish, and German planners have worked continuously on perfecting the designs of intersections to facilitate safe cyclist crossings (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; City of Berlin, 2003; City of Copenhagen, 2002). The extent and specific design of intersection modifications vary, of course, from city to city, but they generally include many of the following:

- Special bike lanes leading up to the intersection, with advance stop lines for cyclists, far ahead of waiting cars
- Advance green traffic signals for cyclists, and extra green signal phases for cyclists at intersections with heavy cycling volumes
- Turn restrictions for cars, while all turns allowed for cyclists
- Highly visible, distinctively colored bike lane crossings at intersections
- Special cyclist-activated traffic lights
- Timing traffic lights to provide a “green wave” for cyclists instead of for cars, generally assuming 14-22km/hr bike speed, depending on type of route
- Insertion of traffic islands and bollards in roadway to sharpen turning radius of cars and thus force them to slow down when turning right
- Realigning bike pathways a bit further away from their parallel streets when they approach intersections to help avoid collisions with right-turning cars

Given the very nature of roadway intersections, it is virtually impossible to avoid all conflicts between motor vehicles and cyclists, but Dutch, Danish, and German planners have done a superb job of minimizing these dangers.

Bike Parking. Extensive bike parking of various sorts is available throughout most Dutch, Danish, and German cities. Local governments and public transport systems themselves directly provide a large number of bike parking facilities. Moreover, private developers and building owners are required by local ordinances to provide specified minimum levels of bike parking both within and adjacent to their buildings (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006; City of Berlin, 2005).

Aside from the large number of bike racks throughout these cities, the most visible and most innovative aspect of bike parking policy is the provision of state-of-the-art parking facilities at train stations. Immediately adjacent to Muenster’s main train station, for example, there is a modern, attractive “bike station” (built in 1999) that offers secure, indoor parking for 3,300 bikes as well as bike repairs, bike rentals, and direct access to all train platforms (Boehme, 2005). Amsterdam, Groningen, and Odense offer similar, high-capacity bike parking facilities at their main train stations (City of Odense, 2007; City of Groningen, 2007; Langenberg, 2000). Moreover, virtually every train station throughout Dutch, Danish, and German metropolitan areas offers bike parking of some sort. In the Berlin region, there were 24,600 bike-and-ride parking spots at train stations in 2005 (including metro, suburban rail, and regional rail), with 7,000 additional bike parking spots planned by 2010 (City of Berlin, 2007).

Many city centers also offer special bike parking facilities. The City of Odense, for example, recently added 400 sheltered bike racks near its main shopping area as well as a state-of-the-art automatic, secure parking station (Andersen, 2005). Groningen offers 36 major bike

parking facilities in its town center, including seven that are guarded to prevent bike theft (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006). Amsterdam has 15 guarded bike parking facilities in its downtown shopping area (City of Amsterdam, 2007). In 2007, Muenster added a secured, indoor parking facility for 290 bikes adjacent to its main shopping district (City of Muenster, 2007). The City of Copenhagen installed 3,300 bike parking spaces in the town center to facilitate cycling for shopping and entertainment trips (City of Copenhagen, 2007).

Clearly, the provision of convenient, secure, sheltered bike parking is essential to cyclists, just as car drivers need parking for their cars. The current policy focus in Dutch, Danish, and German cities is to increase the security of bike parking, since bike theft is a major problem.

The random parking of bikes in public spaces can obstruct pedestrians on sidewalks and is considered by some to be a visual eyesore. Thus, the supply of bike parking is being expanded not only for greater cyclist convenience but also to deal with the clutter of randomly parked bikes. Somewhat similar to car parking in the USA, there never seems to be enough bike parking. In spite of Muenster’s superb bike parking facility at the main train station, for example, there are still over 10,000 bikes parked in the nearby sidewalks, plazas, and alleys, and most of those are not in racks (City of Muenster, 2004).

Integration with Public Transport. Most Dutch, Danish and German cities have integrated cycling with public transport. Public transport systems and city planners in northern Europe have increasingly recognized the key role that bicycling plays as a feeder and distributor service for public transport. Thus, copious bike parking is provided at train stations in the city center as well as at outlying stations along the rail network (North-Rhine Westphalia Ministry of Transport, 2004). In cities such as Muenster, many suburban residents use a bike to reach the nearest suburban rail station, park it there, and then take the train to the city center, where they

continue their trip with another bike they have parked at the main train station (City of Muenster, 2004). Most rail systems charge an additional fee for cyclists to take their bikes on suburban trains, metros, and trams. Moreover, many systems prohibit bikes on vehicles during rush hours, and even if permitted, it can sometimes be less convenient than keeping bikes at parking facilities at both ends of the trip.

Most Dutch, Danish, and German cities we surveyed do not permit bikes to be taken onboard regular city buses, and most buses do not come equipped with bike racks (City of Amsterdam, 2007). That contrasts starkly with the USA, where over 50,000 urban transit buses in 2007 had bike racks to facilitate bike and ride (American Public Transportation Association, 2007). It appears to be the one area where American transit systems do a better job of coordinating cycling with transit. The northern European approach is to provide bike parking facilities at major bus terminals, bus route interchanges, and even some suburban bus stops. Bike-and-ride facilities at bus stops are not nearly as extensive, secure, and comfortable as those at rail stations, but they help offset the lack of bike racks on buses.

Another form of bike-transit integration is the provision of bike rentals at virtually every major Dutch, Danish, and German train station and many suburban stations as well. The German Railways “Call a Bike” program in Berlin is especially innovative. It permits anyone with a mobile phone and credit card to rent one of more than 3,000 German Rail bikes placed all over the city. One simply calls up the “Call a Bike” number, provides credit card information (charged per minute of bike use), and then receives the access code used to unlock the bike (German Railways, 2007). The bike can be left at many different locations throughout the city instead of being returned to the point of origin. The same “Call a Bike” service is offered by

German Railways in other major cities such as Hamburg, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Munich, with a total of over 10,000 such rental bikes.

There is an even more extensive public transport bike program in the Netherlands. In 2007, over a hundred Dutch railway stations provided quick and easy discount bike rentals, operated by OV-Fiets. Payment is made via a special account linked to a season ticket for public transport or a special OV-Fiets membership card (OV-Fiets, 2007).

Training and Education. Dutch, Danish, and German children receive extensive training in safe and effective cycling techniques as part of their regular school curriculum. Most children complete such a course by the fourth grade. It includes both classroom instruction and “on the road” lessons, first on a cycling training track just for children, and then on regular cycling facilities throughout the city. Real police officers test the children, who receive official certificates, pennants, and stickers for their bikes if they pass the test. Since many children get to school by bike, training in safe cycling is considered essential to ensure their safety (German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2002). But it also gets kids off to a lifetime of safe cycling skills. And since all schoolchildren are included, it means that girls as well as boys start cycling at an early age.

Another crucial element in cyclist safety is training motorists to be aware of cyclists on the roadway and to avoid endangering them. In general, motorist training in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany is far more extensive, more thorough, and more expensive than in the USA. Motorists are legally responsible for collisions with children and elderly cyclists (Netherlands Ministry of Transport, 2006; German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2002), even if they are jaywalking, cycling in the wrong direction, ignoring traffic signals, or otherwise behaving contrary to traffic regulations. The priority legal status of non-motorists puts motorists

on the defensive and forces them to drive with special attention to avoiding endangering cyclists and pedestrians.

Traffic Laws. As suggested by the previous section, traffic laws in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany give special consideration to the especially vulnerable situation of cyclists vis-à-vis motor vehicles (German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2006). Thus, they generally require the motorist to make special efforts to anticipate potentially dangerous situations and pro-actively avoid hitting cyclists. Moreover, motorists are generally assumed to be legally responsible for most collisions with cyclists unless it can be proven that the cyclist deliberately caused the crash. Having the right of way by law does not excuse motorists from hitting cyclists, especially children and elderly cyclists.

For the most part, traffic laws intended to protect cyclists and pedestrians from motor vehicles are far more strictly enforced by the police and courts in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany than in the USA. Moreover, cyclists disobeying traffic laws are also more likely to be ticketed than in the USA. In combination with comprehensive and rigorous training of motorists and cyclists, the strict enforcement of traffic laws surely contributes to safer driving behavior by motorists and safer cycling by cyclists.

Promotional Events. Although the provision of safe and convenient cycling facilities is the key approach to promoting cycling, virtually all Dutch, Danish, and German cities have various programs to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for cycling by all groups. Table 2 includes a partial listing of typical promotional measures used by six cities we specifically surveyed: Amsterdam and Groningen (Netherlands), Copenhagen and Odense (Denmark), and Berlin and Muenster (Germany). There were many other creative and interesting programs as well, but Table 2 conveys the sorts of promotional measures undertaken.

Promotional activities tend to be more extensive in Denmark and Germany than in the Netherlands, where cycling levels are already so high that the focus is more on safer cycling than on more cycling, although the two are directly related, as noted earlier.

Complementary taxation, parking, and land-use policies

Most of the above policies refer to measures that make cycling safer and more convenient. Many other important government policies encourage cycling indirectly. Several different categories of such complementary policies are listed in Table 3.

For example, many Dutch, Danish, and German cities impose a range of restrictions on car use, including limits on speeds, turns, direction of travel, and in some cases prohibit car use altogether, such as in car-free zones. Similarly, the provision of road capacity and parking facilities is far less generous than in American cities (Transportation Research Board, 2001; Newman and Kenworthy, 1999). Indeed, roadway and parking supply has been deliberately reduced in many Dutch, Danish, and German cities over the past few decades in order to discourage car use in the city center (Dutch Bicycling Council, 2006). The many restrictions on car use and parking reduce the relative speed, convenience, and flexibility of car travel compared to cycling (Rietveld and Daniel, 2004).

Moreover, sales taxes on petrol and new car purchases, import tariffs, registration fees, license fees, driver training fees, and parking fees are generally much higher in Europe than in the USA (European Union, 2006; Transportation Research Board, 2001; Nivola, 1999; Pucher, 1995). That results in overall costs of car ownership and use two to three times higher in Europe. That higher cost discourages car use to some extent and thus promotes alternative ways of getting around, including cycling, which is surely one of the cheapest of transport modes.

Finally, land use and urban design policies in Dutch, Danish, and German cities are generally much stricter than in the USA and provide more government controls on low-density sprawl and the long trip distances that usually generates (Schmidt and Buehler, 2007; Transportation Research Board, 2001; Alterman, 2001; Nivola, 1999). Moreover, mixed-use zoning and transit-oriented developments have a long history in Europe. They facilitate the proximity of residential areas to commercial establishments, schools, churches, and a range of services. The resulting trip distances are shorter and thus more bikeable than those in the USA.

For the most part, these complementary taxation, parking, and land use policies are not specifically intended to promote cycling. Nevertheless, they provide dramatically more favorable pre-conditions for cycling than in the USA.

The situation in the UK appears to be far less favorable to cycling than in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany (Banister et al, 2007; Banister, 2005; Tolley, 2003; McClintock, 2002; Goodwin, 1999). Interviews conducted by the authors in 2007 with a wide range of transport specialists throughout the UK suggest that British metropolitan areas have a greater supply of motorways and car parking than is typical of the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. Car-free city centers are less common in the UK, traffic calming of residential neighborhoods is far less widespread, speed limits are generally higher, and many firms provide financial incentives to buy cars and drive them to work. Moreover, land use controls tend to be less strict than in the rest of northern Europe. The lack of good coordination between land use and transport has resulted in more low-density suburban sprawl, often strewn along the extensive motorway system surrounding many British cities (Banister, 2005). Clearly, none of the above factors is conducive to cycling. Combined with the lesser extent and inferior quality of cycling

facilities in most British cities, these unfavorable conditions might help explain why only slightly more than one percent of trips (1.3%) in the UK were made by bike in 2005.

One interesting exception in the UK is the congestion pricing scheme in London since 2003, which has produced large increases in cycling, up to 50% by some estimates (Transport for London, 2007a and 2007b). Cycling in London has grown not only due to the restriction of car use but also by the simultaneous provision of expanded and improved cycling facilities.

Conclusions: Policies to Make Cycling Irresistible

The most important approach to making cycling safe and convenient in Dutch, Danish, and German cities is the provision of separate cycling facilities along heavily traveled roads and at intersections, combined with extensive traffic calming of residential neighborhoods. Safe and relatively stress-free cycling routes are especially important for children, the elderly, women, and for anyone with special needs due to any sort of disability. Providing such separate facilities to connect practical, utilitarian origins and destinations also promotes cycling for work, school, and shopping trips, as opposed to the mainly recreational cycling in the USA, where most separate cycling facilities are along urban parks, rivers, and lakes or in rural areas.

As noted in this article, separate facilities are only part of the solution. Dutch, Danish, and German cities reinforce the safety, convenience, and attractiveness of excellent cycling rights of way with extensive bike parking, integration with public transport, comprehensive traffic education and training of both cyclists and motorists, and a wide range of promotional events intended to generate enthusiasm and wide public support for cycling.

Would such pro-cycling policies as those listed in Tables 1 and 2 be possible in a country as the USA? Some of the same policies are already used, but to a much lesser extent, in many American cities (Pucher et al., 1999). Moreover, there has been considerable expansion of such

measures in recent years, with even more expansion planned. Generous federal funding has helped finance 6,165km of bike lanes, 3,483km of multi-use bike-ped paths, and 36,195 bike parking racks in the 50 largest US cities (Thunderhead Alliance, 2007). Bike parking at rail stations has been increasing, and as noted earlier, over 50,000 buses in the USA already come equipped with bike racks to facilitate bike and ride. Moreover, all states now have federally funded Safe Routes to School programs designed to help children walk or bike to school.

With the highest bike share of work trips (4%) of the 50 largest US cities, Portland, Oregon probably has the country's most successful bicycling program (City of Portland, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Portland has more than tripled the total annual number of bike trips since 1991. That is partly due to a range of pro-bike measures such as expanding its bikeway network, increasing bike parking, and integrating cycling with bus and rail systems. In addition, bicycling in Portland benefits from the country's most famous land use planning reforms, which have restricted leapfrog suburban sprawl and encouraged compact, mixed-use development conducive to shorter, more bikeable trips. Portland has also reduced the supply of car parking in the city center while improving public transport services. Very few American cities can boast of such an integrated range of policies to promote cycling.

While Portland has been a model bicycling city, Chicago and New York provide some impressive examples of what can be done to promote cycling even in two megacities which for decades had been extremely hostile to cycling. In the past ten years Chicago has added over 160km of bike lanes and paths, established a city-wide cycling network, installed 7,000 racks for bike parking, and equipped over 2,000 buses with racks to encourage bike and ride. Moreover, the latest official bicycling plan calls for further expansion to create an 800km bikeway network (City of Chicago, 2007). New York has added 392km of bike paths and lanes in the past ten

years and plans an additional 900km of bike paths and lanes in the coming ten years (New York City Department of Transportation, 2007a). From 2001 to 2007, New York installed over 3,000 new bike racks. Official city plans call for a network of 2,880km of bike lanes and greenway paths by 2030. Cycling levels in both Chicago and New York have increased considerably. Annual cordon counts conducted by the City of New York at a wide range of locations throughout Manhattan indicate that cycling levels more than doubled (116% increase) between 2000 and 2007 (New York City Department of Transportation, 2007b).

In short, such pro-bike ‘carrot’ policies are indeed possible even in a car-oriented country as the USA. By comparison, there is almost no political support in the USA for adopting and implementing the sorts of car-restrictive ‘stick’ policies listed in Table 3 that indirectly encourage cycling in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. In those three countries, car use is far more expensive and much less convenient than in the USA due to a host of taxes and restrictions on car ownership, use, and parking. Moreover, strict land use policies foster relatively compact, mixed-use developments that generate more bikeable, shorter trips. Promoting cycling is surely not the main purpose of such policies, but they clearly provide important incentives and supportive conditions for cycling.

With very few exceptions, such as Portland Oregon, neither car-restrictive measures nor stringent land use controls have yet been politically acceptable in American cities (Pucher et al, 1999; Banister et al., 2007). The public and the media vigorously oppose even slight increases in the petrol tax, for example, and thus discourage politicians from even considering increased taxation on car use. Similarly, there is little support for restrictions on car parking, speeds, and passage of cars through city centers and residential neighborhoods. Thus, there appears to be

only very limited potential for implementation in the USA of these crucial ‘stick’ approaches that would encourage cycling.

Even in a city such as New York, where a majority of residents have no cars, it has been an uphill battle trying to approve the proposed congestion pricing scheme for Manhattan. It would involve a charge of \$8 for cars and \$21 for trucks to enter Manhattan south of 86th Street on weekdays between 6am and 6pm (New York City Department of Transportation, 2007a). Both Mayor Bloomberg (of New York City) and Governor Spitzer (of New York State) strongly support congestion pricing, and the U.S. Department of Transportation has offered \$353 million in subsidy to help finance the program. The plan remains highly controversial, however, and a combined state and city commission has been established to evaluate it. The federal government has set a deadline of March 31, 2008 for final city and state approval of the congestion pricing plan, and a deadline of March 31, 2009 for its implementation. Based on the London experience, it seems likely that congestion pricing in New York would increase cycling levels, especially since the city plans to greatly expand its cycling facilities at the same time.

The key to the success of cycling policies in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany is the coordinated implementation of the multi-faceted, mutually reinforcing set of policies summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Not only do these countries implement far more of the pro-bike measures, but they greatly reinforce their overall impact with highly restrictive policies that make car use less convenient as well as more expensive. It is precisely that double-barreled combination of ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ policies that make cycling so irresistible.

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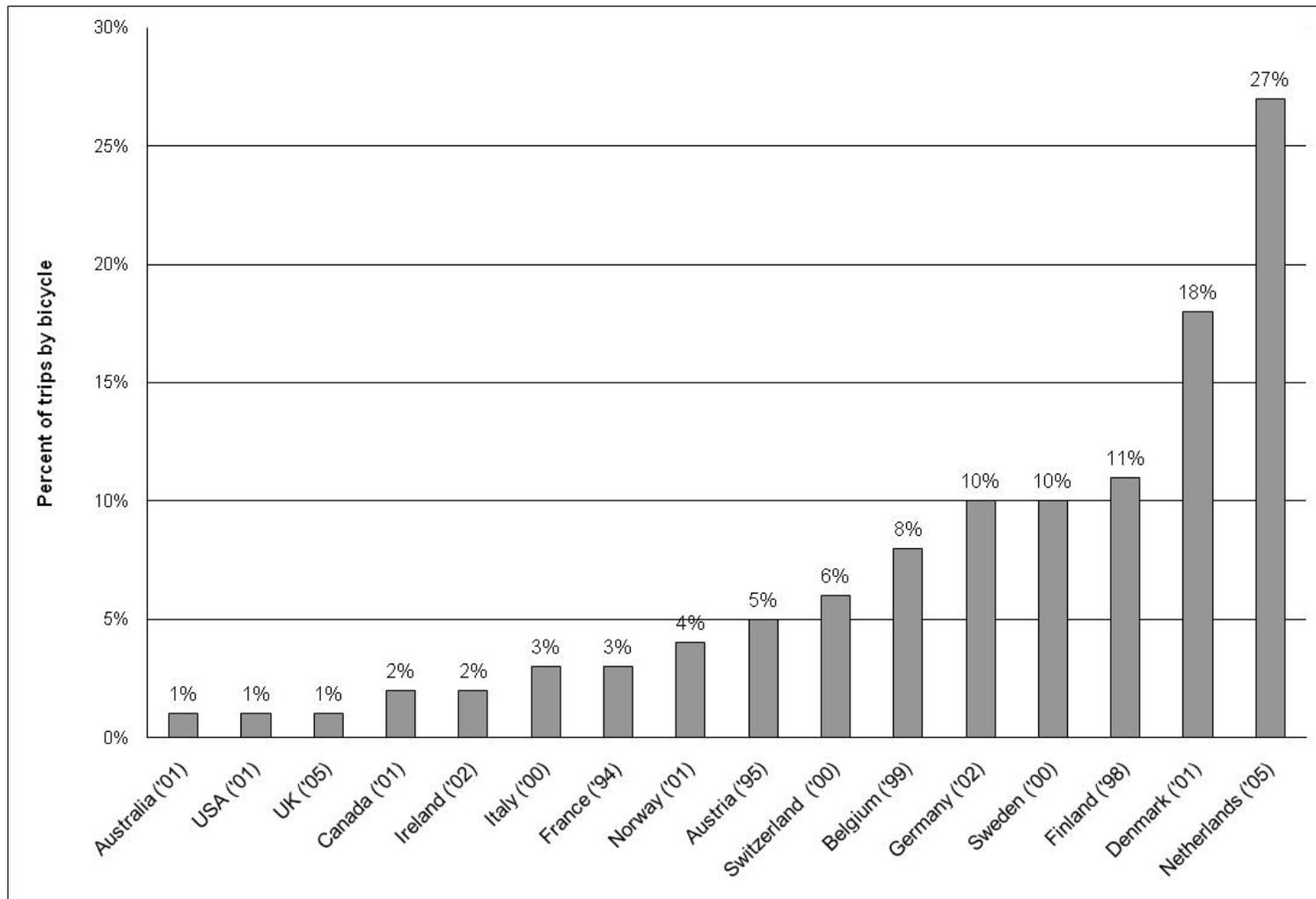


Figure 1. Bicycle share of trips in Europe, North America, and Australia (Percent of total trips by bicycle)

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2006); Department for Transport (2005); OECD (2005); European Conference of the Ministers of Transport (2004); European Union (2003); U.S. Department of Transportation (2003); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2003)

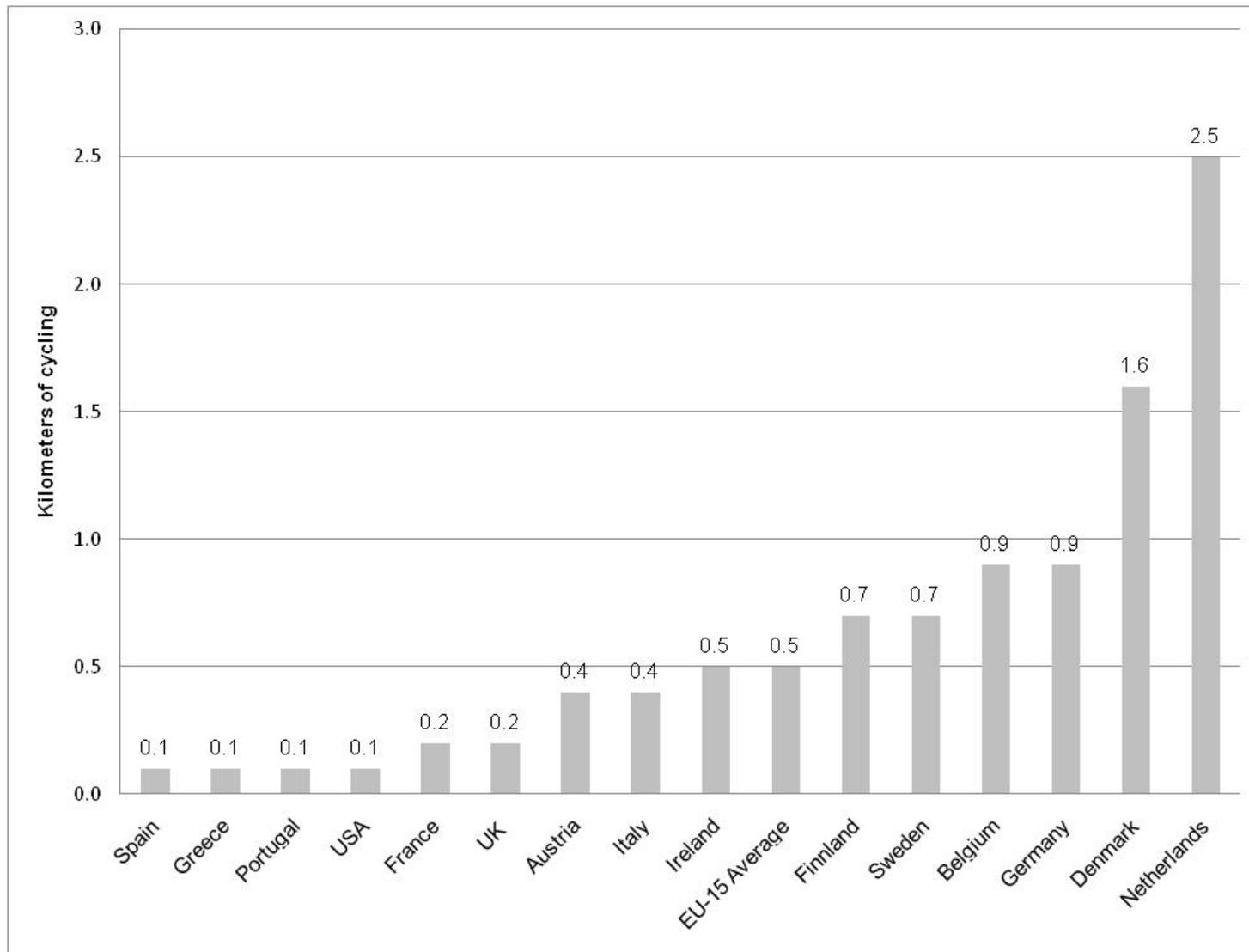


Figure 2. Kilometers cycled per inhabitant per day in Europe and USA

Source: European Union (2002)

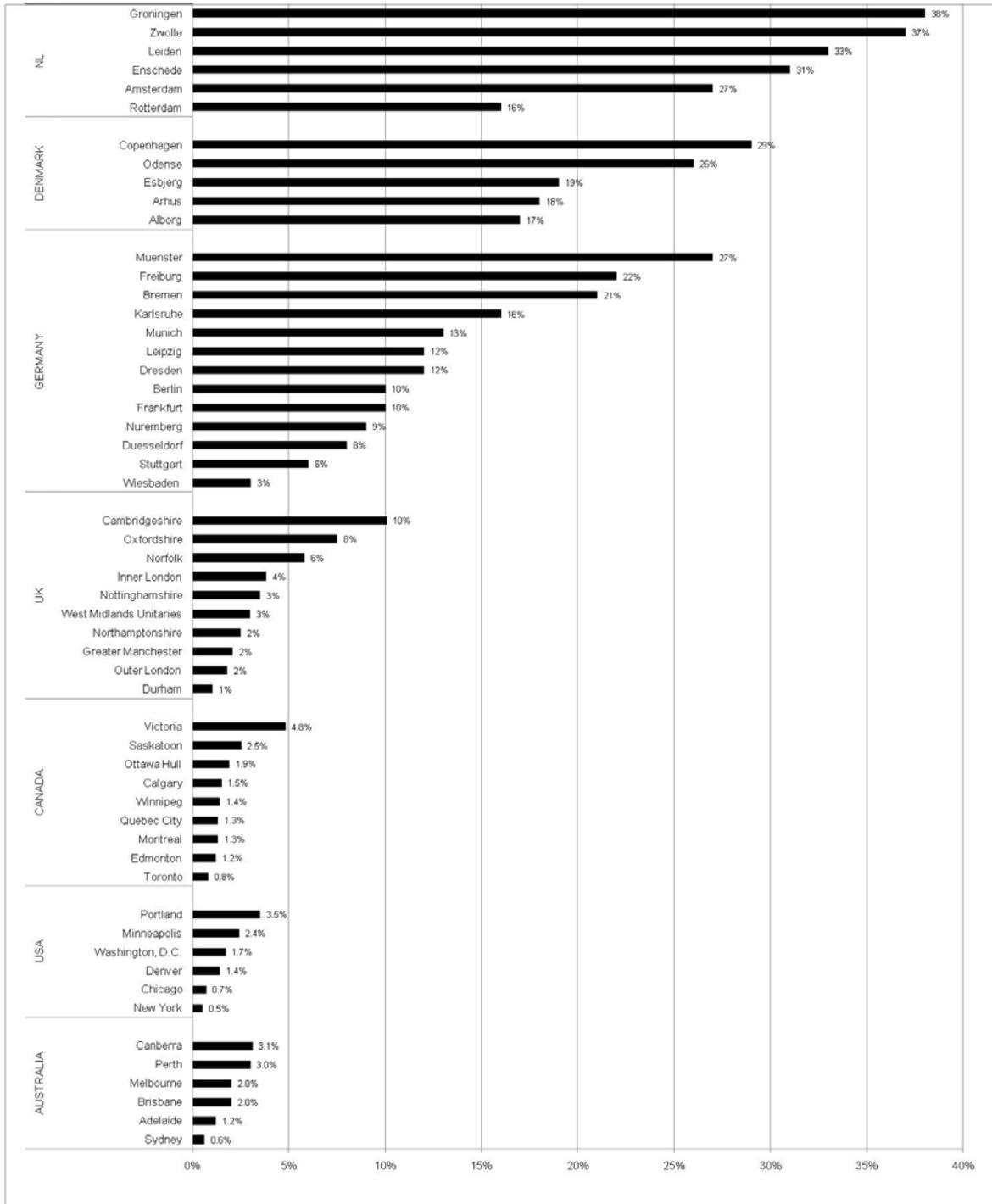


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Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007); Statistics Canada (2007); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007); Socialdata (2007); Dutch Bicycling Council (2006); Department for Transport (2006); Andersen (2005).

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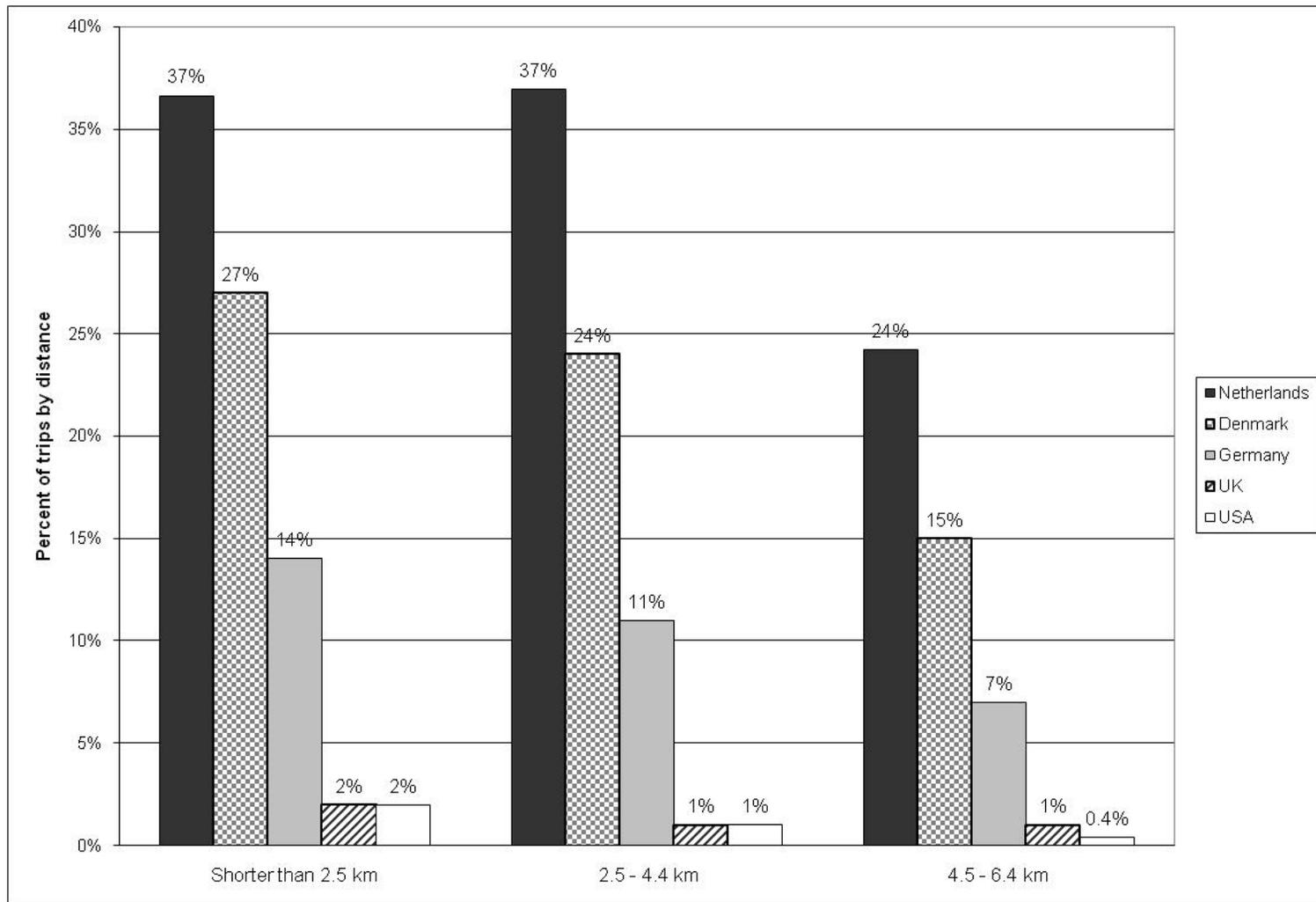


Figure 4. Bicycling share of short trips in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK, and USA (2000-2005)

Sources: Danish Ministry of Transport (2007); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2006); Department for Transport (2005); U.S. Department of Transportation (2003); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2003)

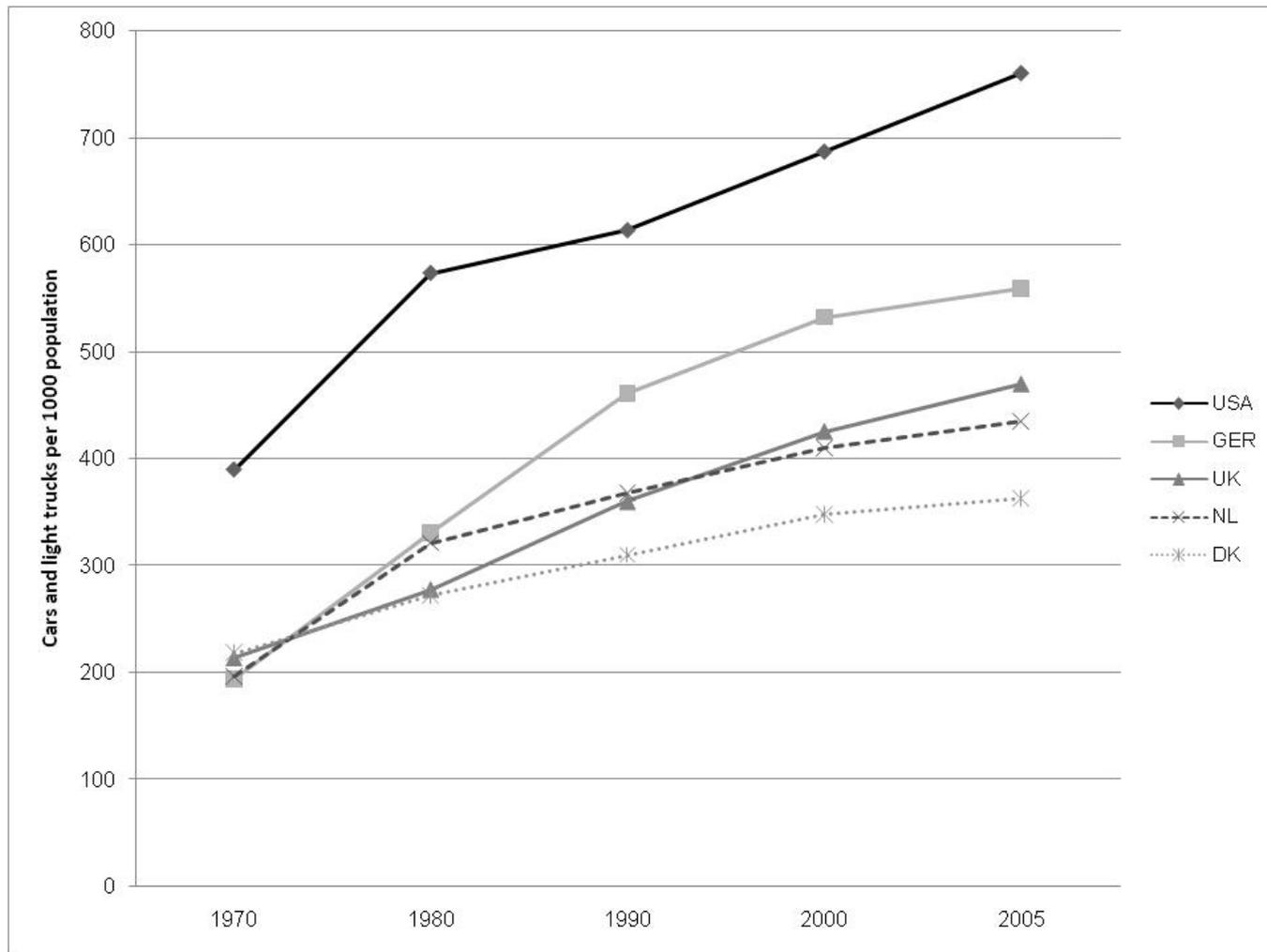


Figure 5. Trend in car and light truck ownership per 1000 population in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK, and USA, 1970-2005

Sources: U.S. Department of Transportation (2007); European Union (2006)

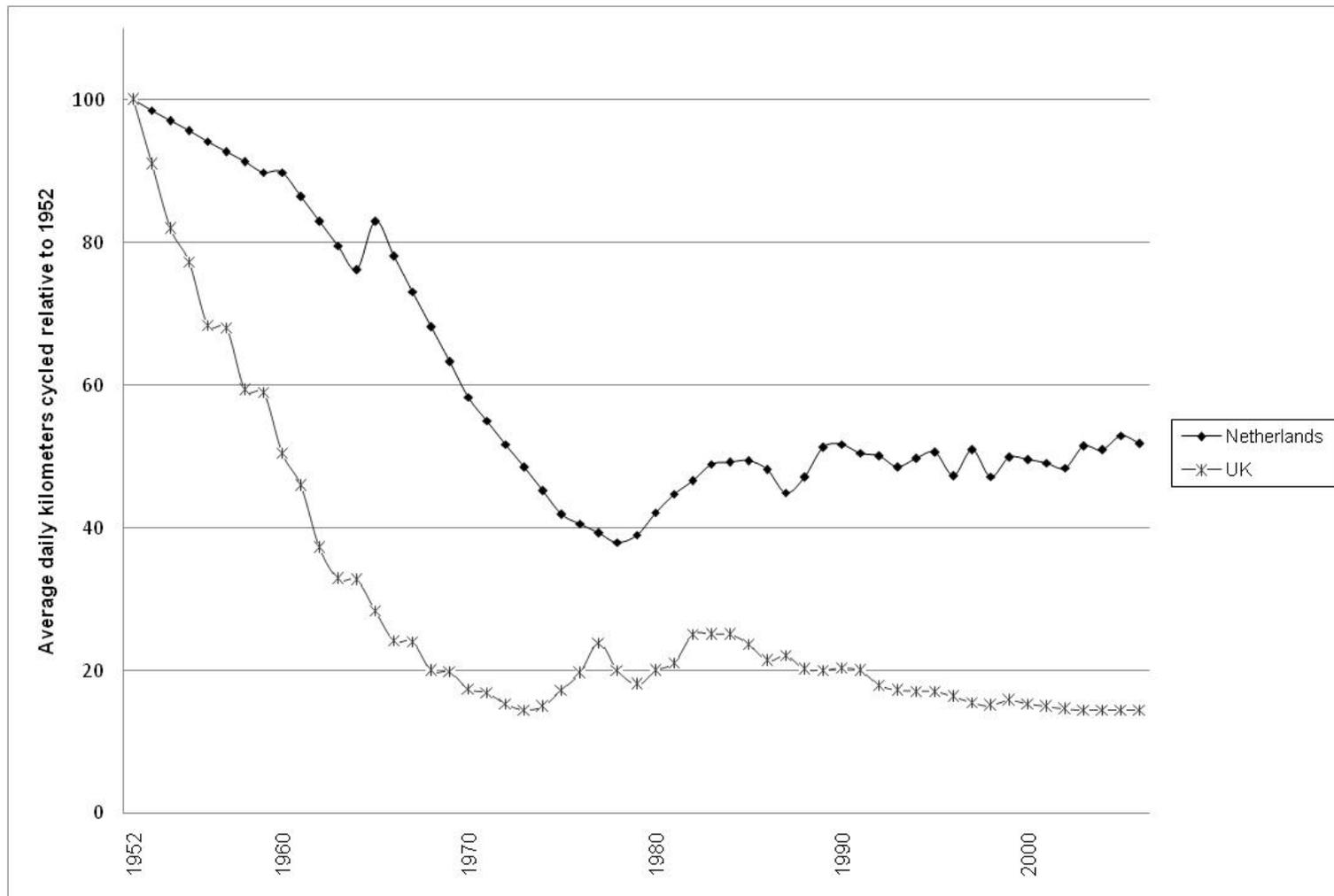


Figure 6. Trend in kilometers cycled per inhabitant per year in the Netherlands and UK 1952 - 2006 (percent relative to 1950 level)

Sources: Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007); Department for Transportation (2007)

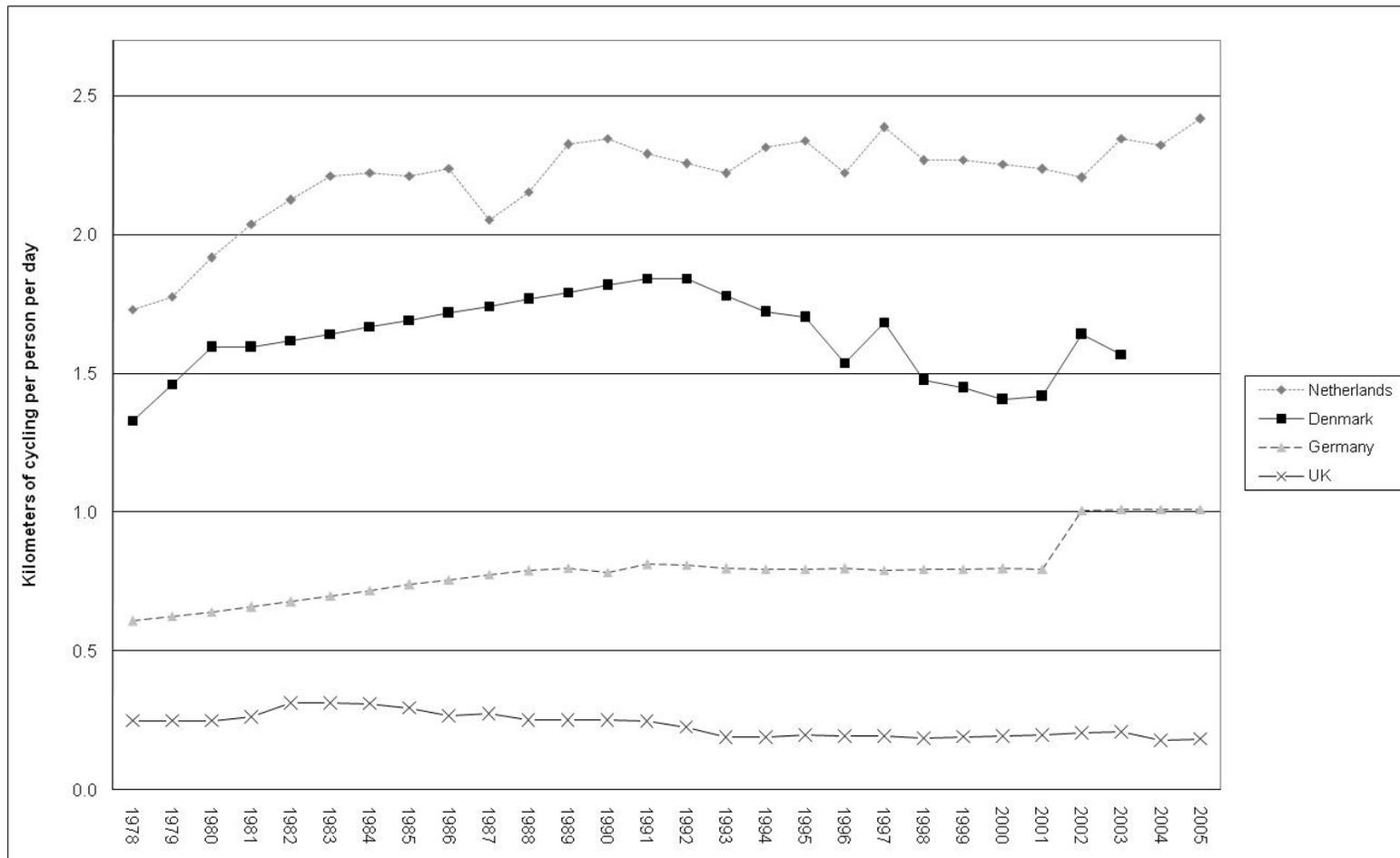


Figure 7. Trend in kilometers cycled per inhabitant per day in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and UK (1978-2005)

Sources: Danish Ministry of Transport (2007), Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2007); Department for Transportation (2007)

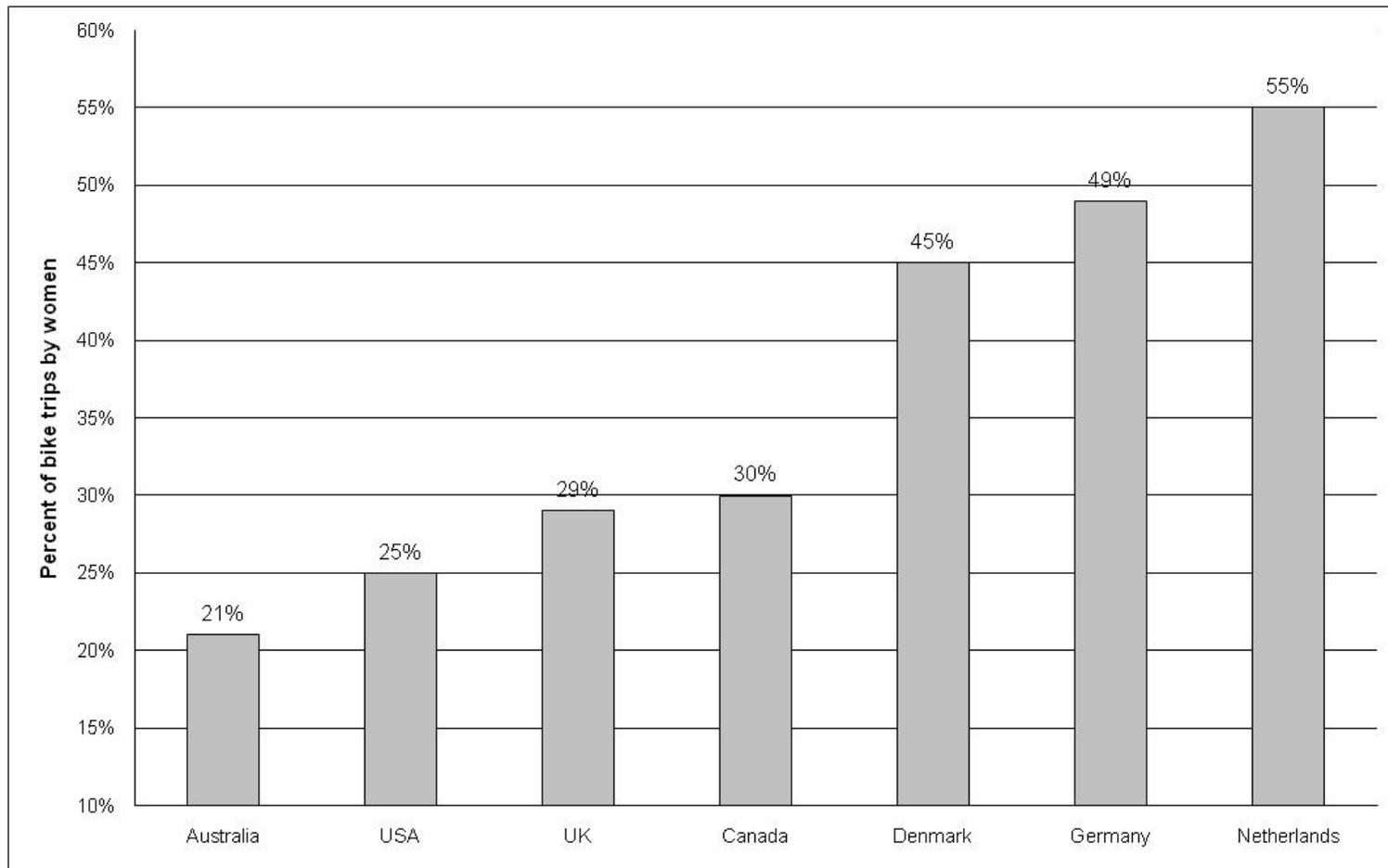


Figure 8. Women's share of total bike trips in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK, Australia, and North America (2000 - 2005)

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007); Department for Transport (2007); Danish Ministry of Transport (2005); Statistics Netherlands (2005); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2003); U.S. Department of Transportation (2003) and information provided directly by bike planners in Canadian provinces and cities

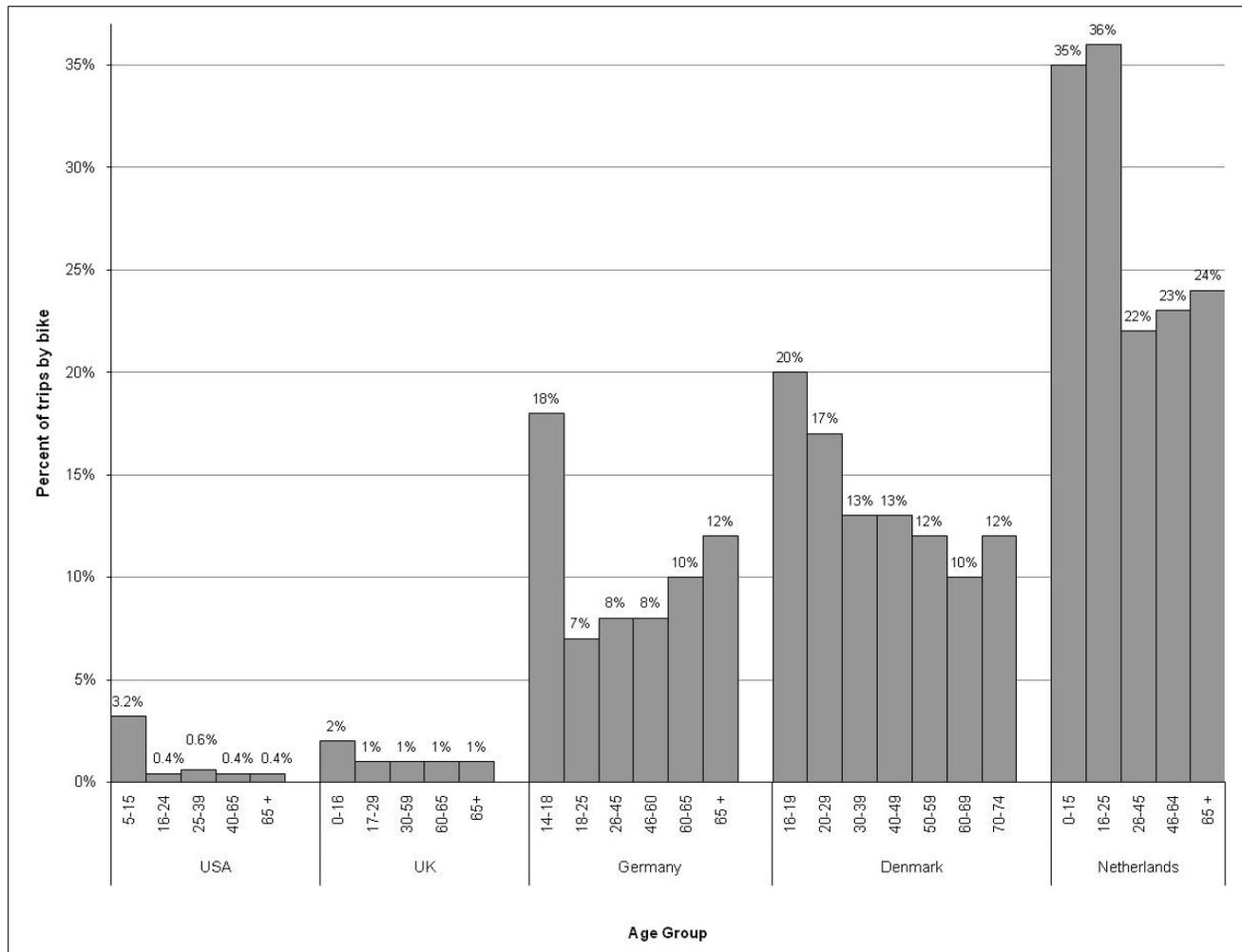


Figure 9. Bicycling share of trips by age group in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK and USA (2000-2002)

Sources: Department for Transport (2007); Danish Ministry of Transport (2005); Statistics Netherlands (2005); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2003); U.S. Department of Transportation (2003)

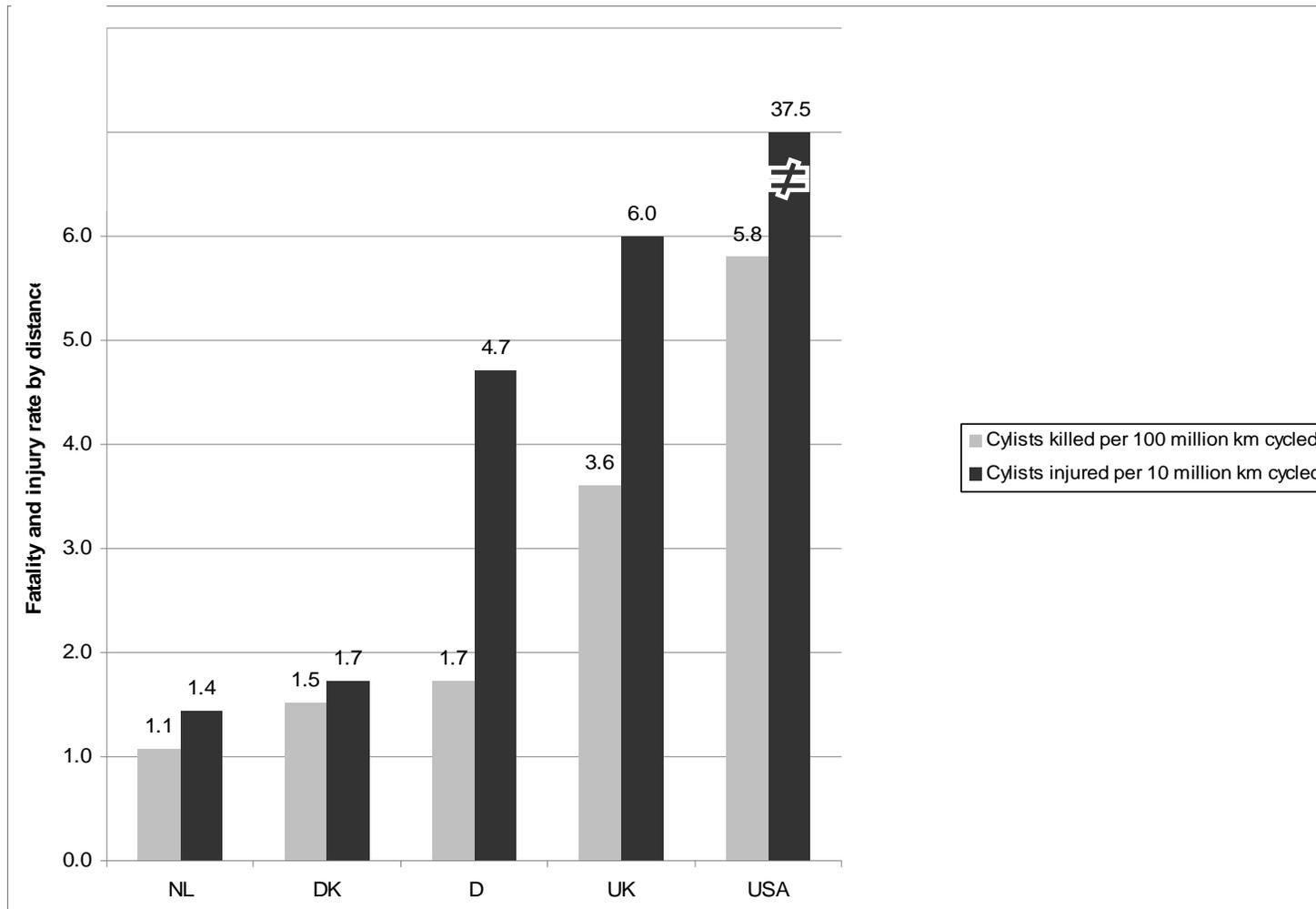


Figure 10. Fatality rates and non-fatal injury rates in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK and USA 2004-2005

Sources: Danish Ministry of Transport (2007); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2007); U.S. Department of Transportation (2007); Department for Transportation (2007)

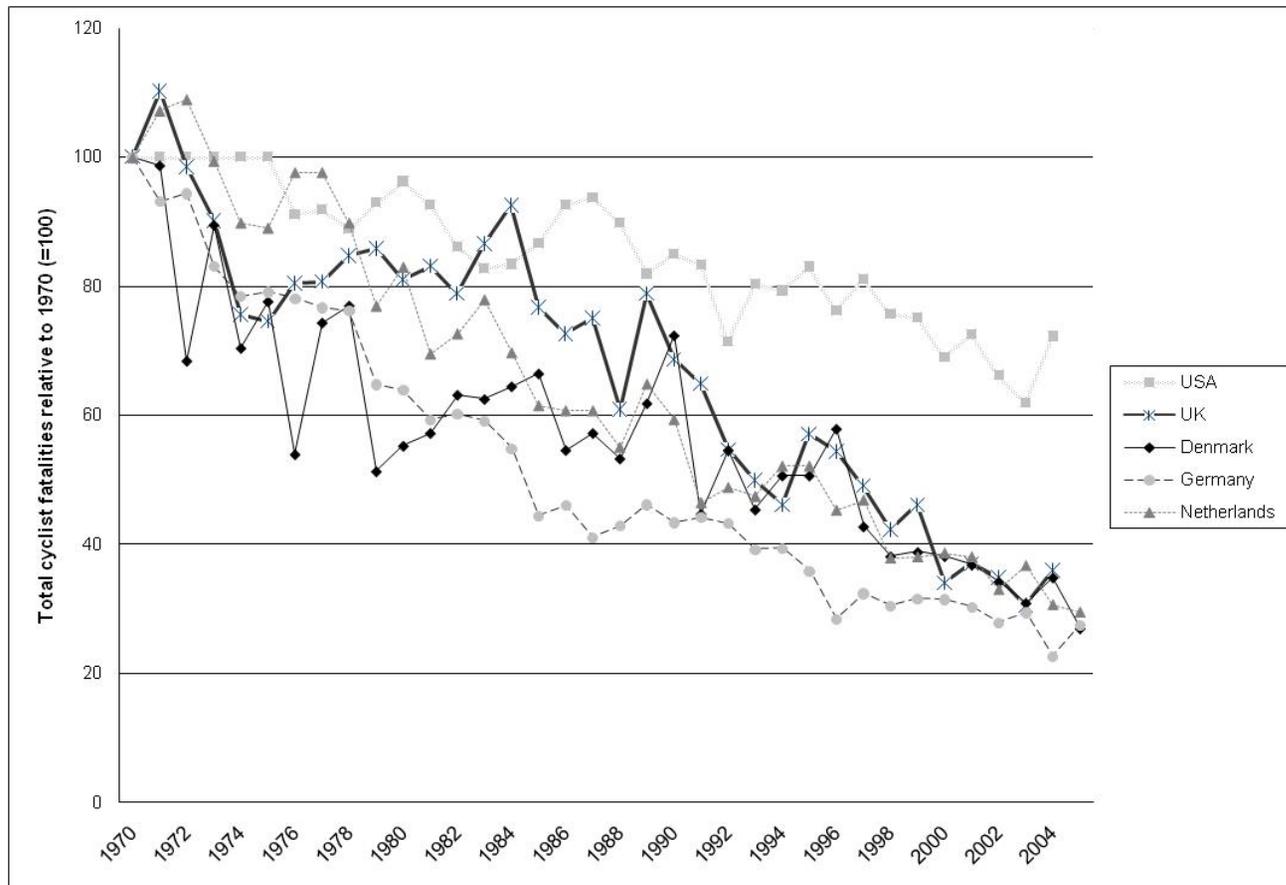


Figure 11. Trend in cycling fatalities in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK and USA, 1970 - 2005 (Percent relative to 1970 level)

Sources: Danish Ministry of Transport (2007); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007); German Federal Ministry of Transport (2007); U.S. Department of Transportation (2007); Department for Transport (2007)

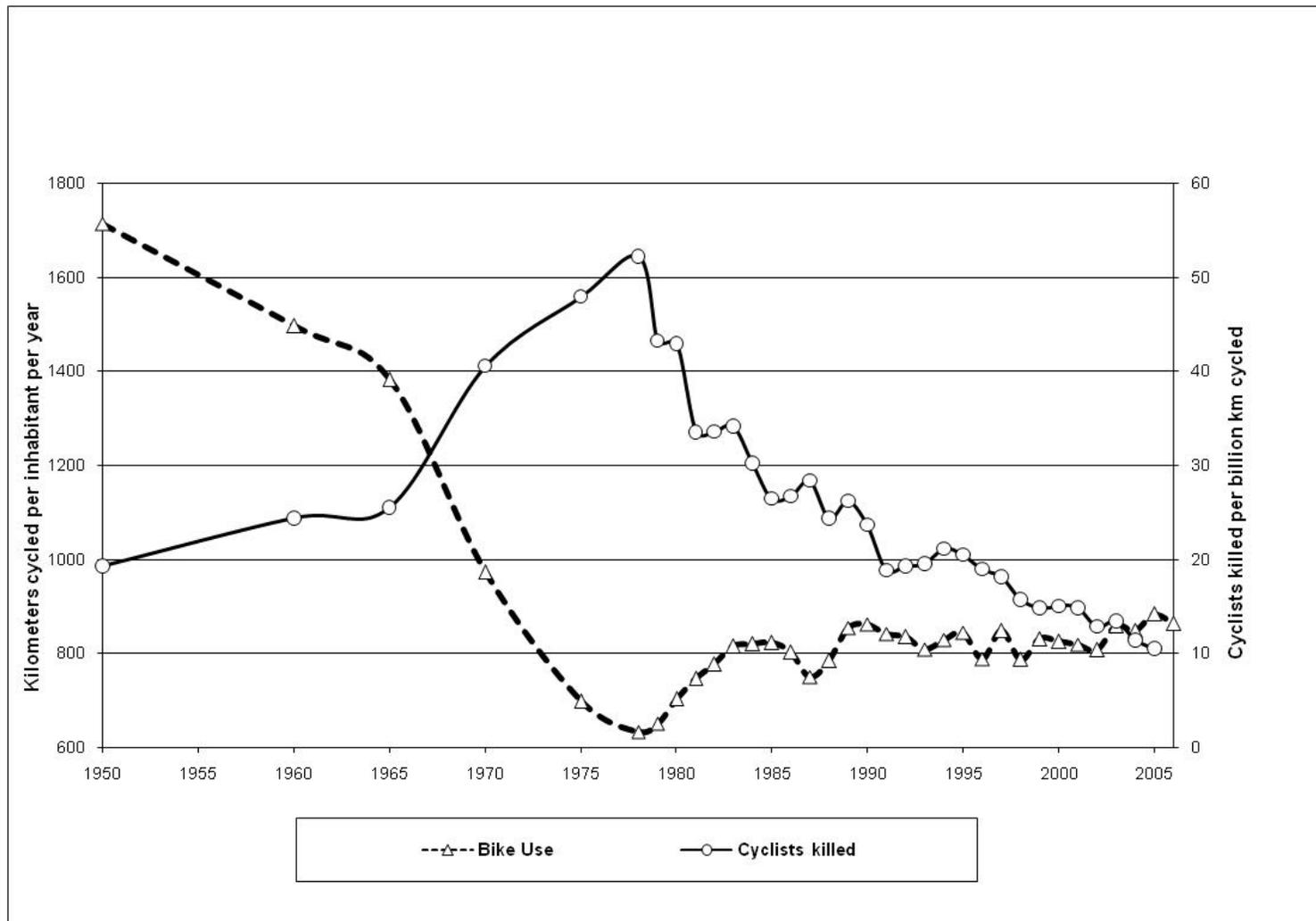


Figure 12. Inverse trends in cycling fatality rates and annual kilometers cycled per inhabitant in the Netherlands, 1950 to 2005

Source: Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2007)

Table 1. Key policies and innovative measures used in Dutch, Danish, and German cities to promote safe and convenient cycling

Extensive systems of separate cycling facilities

- Well maintained, fully integrated paths, lanes and special bicycle streets in cities and surrounding regions
- Fully coordinated system of color coded directional signs for bicyclists
- Off-street short-cuts, such as mid-block connections, and passages through dead ends for cars

Intersection modifications and priority traffic signals

- Advance green lights for cyclists at most intersections
- Advanced cyclist waiting positions (ahead of cars) fed by special bike lanes facilitate safer and quicker crossings and turns
- Cyclist short cuts to make right-hand turns before intersections and exemption from red traffic signals at T-intersections, thus increasing cyclist speed and safety
- Bike paths turn into brightly colored bike lanes when crossing intersections
- Traffic signals are synchronized at cyclist speeds assuring consecutive green lights for cyclists (green wave)
- Bollards with flashing lights along bike routes signal cyclists the right speed to reach the next intersection at a green light

Traffic calming

- Traffic calming of all residential neighborhoods via speed limit (30km/hr) and physical infrastructure deterrents for cars
- Bicycle streets, narrow roads where bikes have absolute priority over cars
- "Home Zones" with 5 km/h speed limit, where cars must yield to pedestrians and cyclists using the road

Bike parking

- Large supply of good bike parking throughout the city
- Improved lighting and security of bike parking facilities often featuring guards, video-surveillance, and priority parking for women

Coordination with public transport

- Extensive bike parking at all metro, suburban, and regional train stations
- "Call-a-Bike" programs: bikes can be rented by cell phone at transit stops, paid for by the minute and left at any busy intersection in the city
- Bike rentals at most train stations
- Deluxe bike parking garages at some train stations, with video surveillance, special lighting, music, repair services, and bike rentals

Traffic education and training

- Comprehensive cycling training courses for virtually all school children with test by traffic police
- Special cycling training test tracks for children
- Stringent training of motorists to respect pedestrians and cyclists and avoid hitting them

Traffic laws

- Special legal protection for children and elderly cyclists
- Motorists assumed by law to be responsible for almost all crashes with cyclists
- Strict enforcement of cyclist rights by police and courts

Source: Information provided directly to authors by bicycling coordinators in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.

Table 2. Cycling promotion in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany
<p><u>Access to bikes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free use of distinctive, simple City Bikes parked throughout the city, as in Copenhagen • Easy, convenient, and inexpensive bike rentals at train stations and throughout the city , such as the "OV fiets" and "Call a Bike" programs in in the Netherlands and Germany • Company bikes loaned for free to employees who can use them during the day for short business trips • Tax breaks to purchase a bike in the Netherlands • Convenient air pumps for bikes in city center • "Park and Bike" : discount bike rentals for motorists who park their cars and bike for the rest of the journey
<p><u>Bike trip planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycling websites with extensive information for cyclists on bicycling routes, activities, special programs, health benefits of cycling, bikes and bike accessories, etc. • Flexible internet bike trip planning tool allows finding the most comfortable or quickest route by bike tailored to the specific preferences and needs of each person • Comprehensive bike maps for most cities as well as most regions and states
<p><u>Public awareness campaigns</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on health benefits of cycling, such as the “Get Rid of the Sack” program in Odense targeted at overweight middle-aged men with pot bellies who need more exercise • Special fun programs for young children, such as the “Cycling Duckie” in Odense, who distributes candy, balloons, free bike accessories, and other gifts to children learning to cycle • Cycling ambassador programs that send well-trained cyclists to residential neighborhoods to serve as role models of safe cycling and help with cycling promotion, distributing newsletters and information • Annual bicycling festivals and car-free days that promote the environmental advantages of bicycling, display the latest bike models and accessories, and disseminate various other relevant information for bike enthusiasts • Wide range of cycling competitions for different ages and skill levels • Special guided bike tours for seniors
<p><u>Public participation in bike planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys of cyclists to assess their satisfaction with cycling facilities and programs and to gather specific suggestions for improvement • Bike councils that provide a platform for opinion exchange among stakeholders from businesses, the bike industry, the city administration, research institutes, universities, bike experts, and citizen advocacy groups, such as the "Fahrrat" in Berlin
<p>Source: Information provided directly to authors by bicycling coordinators in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.</p>

Table 3. Taxation, parking, and land use policies that encourage cycling indirectly
<p><u><i>Automobile speed limitations in cities</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic calming of residential neighborhoods limits cars to speeds of 30km/hr or less • "Home zones" in many neighborhoods give cyclists and pedestrians equal rights to road use and limit cars to <i>walking speed</i> (about 7km/hr) • Car-free zones, one-way streets, and artificial dead-ends make car travel through the city center slow and inconvenient • Turn restrictions for cars but not for cyclists • Almost no limited access highways (motorways) in city centers • Strictly enforced speed limits and traffic rules in cities (such as police cameras at red • Frequent random speed limit enforcement checks by the police • Advance stop lines and traffic signal priority for cyclists
<p><u><i>Road and parking capacity limitations</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of parking places in city centers • Parking management schemes limit easy car access to urban neighborhoods, often with resident-only parking or strict time limits • Replacing car parking facilities with bike parking instead • Combined bus-bike lanes that permit bike use but prohibit car use • Deliberately narrowed roads in city centers force cars to drive slowly • Special bicycle streets that sharply limit car speeds and give cyclists priority in roadway use over the entire width of the road
<p><u><i>Taxation of automobile ownership and use</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High taxes and fees on car purchase, ownership, and use • Especially high excise and sales taxes on petrol • High hourly parking rates in city center, even in medium size cities • High fees and strict training requirements for obtaining a driver's license (over €1,500 in Germany)
<p><u><i>Strict land use planning policies</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most land beyond already built-up areas is off-limits for new development • Most new development occurs adjacent to already built-up areas, which keeps overall population densities high compared to the USA • Transport and land use planning are integrated at several levels of government, with regional coordination that fosters cooperation between adjacent communities in their • Many local governments specifically require cycling and walking facilities for new suburban developments, thus reducing the need for car use • Mixed use zoning keeps trip distances short and feasible by bicycle and on foot • Less strict separation of land uses than in USA, thus enabling natural development of mixed-use neighborhoods
<p>Sources: Schmidt and Buehler (2007); Dutch Bicycling Council (2006); Netherlands Ministry of Transport (2006); Banister (2005); European Conference of the Ministers of Transport (2004); Pucher and Dijkstra (2003); Transportation Research Board (2001); Alterman (2001); Nivola (1999); Bratzel (1999); Pucher (1995)</p>