

Curb Enthusiasm Episode 4 Transcript

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;10;03

Emily Weidenhof

Welcome to Curb Enthusiasm. I'm Emily Weidenhof, joined today by Shawn Macias, director of the bicycle program at D O T.

00;00;10;05 - 00;00;11;12

Shawn Macias

Great to be here with you.

00;00;11;15 - 00;00;18;15

Emily Weidenhof

On this episode, we chat with Ryan Russo, executive director of the National Association of City Transportation Officials

00;00;18;15 - 00;00;32;22

Shawn Macias

N A C T O is an association of 100 major North American cities and transit agencies that connects, mobilizes, and advocates for the members to make bold, innovative, people first change in urban transportation.

00;00;32;24 - 00;00;43;23

Emily Weidenhof

Prior to leading N A C T O, Ryan served as the first director of the Oakland Department of Transportation, where he led the agency through its inaugural five years of operation.

00;00;43;26 - 00;01;00;14

Shawn Macias

Ryan also spent nearly 14 years at the New York City Department of Transportation, ultimately rising to the position of deputy commissioner and serving as an instrumental leader in the transformation of New York City D O T from a focus on moving cars and trucks to meeting the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.

00;01;00;17 - 00;01;15;07

Emily Weidenhof

All right. Welcome, Ryan. Welcome back to East Coast Time. So nice to have you back in New York City. So, for our listeners who may not be too familiar with N A C T O, can you tell us what it is and why it's so important?

00;01;15;09 - 00;01;28;08

Ryan Russo

Awesome. Well, first of all, it's amazing to be back at 55 Water Street at the New York City DOT offices. I spent many years here working with you and your colleagues to, you know, do this public service that you are all doing every day.

00;01;28;08 - 00;01;58;09

Ryan Russo

And it's really a thrill to be here. So now I'm the executive director of NACTO, so it's the National Association of City Transportation Officials, and it's basically your, your agency's professional association. So, city departments of transportation, there are 100 of these agencies that are members paying dues to us to help champion you to be the glue between cities and transit agencies around the country that want safe, equitable, sustainable streets and public spaces.

00;01;58;09 - 00;02;18;26

Ryan Russo

So, we provide insights, ideas, inspiration. We pull together your wisdom and best practices and then support you policy wise in Washington DC, to get you more resources and to help those best practices spread quickly so that you can serve your communities. Get those streets, transformed as fast as possible.

00;02;18;28 - 00;02;27;19

Emily Weidenhof

Great. And of the cities that you get to work with, who are some cities that are out there doing really amazing and inspirational things right now?

00;02;27;22 - 00;02;47;21

Ryan Russo

Oh, well, I have to start with you guys. Of course, New York City. You know, we just got a tour of the work on Broadway and our team at NACTO. Thank you so much for that tour, Emily. We were blown away by the changes that have happened over the course of the years, the creativity in the street design and everything we see there.

00;02;47;21 - 00;03;10;19

Ryan Russo

You know, we've got members really big and small now around the country innovating in lots of different ways. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, SFMTA is one of the few that are actually emerged, transit agency and in essence, the DOT right of way manager and, you know, since the pandemic, the scores of miles of bus lanes and protected bike lanes that have gone down have been tremendous.

00;03;10;19 - 00;03;46;17

Emily Weidenhof

The adjustments to the transit service that have happened there, getting people back on transit, reflecting post pandemic, travel behavior is really, really something, something

special. And, you know, we've got, you know, cities like Boca Raton, Florida joining N A C T O. So, it's really a national movement that that's happening. And people want our tools, our expertise and each other's expertise to sort of figure out everything from, you know, what kind of concrete or plastic barrier we should have for our protected bike lane to what are the best practices to doing equitable community engagement?

00;03;46;19 - 00;03;55;12

Shawn Macias

Great. What have been the main differences working in transportation? First here a D O T then in Oakland and then now back at N A C T O.

00;03;55;14 - 00;04;19;20

Ryan Russo

Well, first of all, scale. So, working in the City of New York, you know, 8.5 million people, city of Oakland, 440,000 people. So, really get a different sense of scale. You know, when I worked in New York City, we were really building the machine to deliver lots of projects and to sort of figure out how do we all work together to get the streets changed?

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Ryan Russo

As fast as possible and, and figuring out the details of all of that delivery. When I went to Oakland, I was, the first permanent director of a new department. O A K D O T was created in a reorganization, from the Public Works Department to have an agency dedicated, to managing the right of way with values in mind of equity, sustainability, safety.

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Ryan Russo

And the job there was to build, that team and build that capacity and manage that team so that it also could deliver for its residents and for their values. Now that I'm at N A C T O, you know, really, it's about taking - N A C T O is a supportive place that is clearing the path. Hopefully for cities and its members, and the public servants to get things done around the country.

00;05;06;17 - 00;05;37;12

Ryan Russo

So hopefully I'm part of a team that's taking its experience and knowledge and doing that work and sharing it with cities. You know, it's more teaching, it's more education, it's more supportive and sort of on the back half of my career, it's really exciting for me personally to be in this role where, you know, maybe you learns a thing or two over 20 plus years that you could share and someone could take, whether that's how should we organize ourselves to deliver to some of the more, you know, technical work that that cities are dealing with.

00;05;37;14 - 00;05;48;12

Shawn Macias

It's fascinating to hear how the positions kind of force you to evolve as a speaker, and as somebody in the in the public realm, how have these positions kind of informed your view on leadership?

00;05;48;14 - 00;05;59;26

Ryan Russo

You know, I've seen different styles of leadership in different places and, and different willingness amongst elected leaders to sort of take risks and innovate and to stand up for the work.

00;05;59;28 - 00;06;28;16

Ryan Russo

But also, what I've learned over time is how much, how important it is to stand up for the people doing the work, which isn't always the same thing. You know, I've learned firsthand how passionate public servants are to, you know, they get in this business not to take gold plated vacations or retire early. They're doing this because they believe in keeping the public safe and, you know, correcting historic wrongs and they're facing lots of challenges.

00;06;28;16 - 00;06;50;18

Ryan Russo

And so, you know, a strong leader, you know, supports them and sometimes, you know, gets in the way and takes the fire for things like when, you know, a privileged community is asking to, to distract from the data driven needs that the planning has surfaced that we need to, you know, focus our resources on. And then sometimes there's asks to go do the work in someplace else and shift gears.

00;06;50;18 - 00;07;06;10

Ryan Russo

And, you know, leaders are really important to sort of say, well, we had a plan. We adopted a policy. You said, this is what we want to do. How do we how do we stick with that? You know, leadership comes with a cost. And I've seen leaders who step up and stick with it, which is, you know, commendable.

00;07;06;13 - 00;07;18;08

Shawn Macias

Absolutely. And I know being on the side where you're getting a lot of 'no's', hearing a lot of 'no's', it's great to be supported so you can secure the one 'yes'. That gets the project, you know, across the finish line.

00;07;18;10 - 00;07;24;27

Emily Weidenhof

Ryan, could you share a little bit about how you found yourself, in the transportation field, what led you here?

00;07;24;27 - 00;07;29;03

Emily Weidenhof

What interests you? What keeps you in the transportation planning field?

00;07;29;06 - 00;07;47;15

Ryan Russo

Yeah. Well, first of all, I grew up in a rail suburb on Long Island, and I had one of those, you know, like 80s childhoods where you could, like, bike around your neighborhood. But all of my friends lived on the other side of this really nasty arterial Jericho Turnpike that I wasn't allowed to cross.

00;07;47;17 - 00;08;12;29

Ryan Russo

And it was, you know, isolating and lonely. And I think that's like it was it's amazing that in my career now, I've had the opportunity to try to stitch neighborhoods together by making those big streets, you know, friendlier, easier to cross. But I directly came to urban planning and fell in love with cities out of undergrad. I was living in New York City on the Upper East Side and getting to my job in Midtown.

00;08;12;29 - 00;08;40;20

Ryan Russo

I occasionally biked, but actually it was the late 90s, so I used rollerblades, down Second Avenue with no, no bike lanes, to get to my office job in, in midtown. And I loved how convenient it was and not crowded on the subway, and then discovered that there was a whole world of trying to make our streets safer and better, and that you could sort of have a career in, helping our transportation system.

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Ryan Russo

And I hadn't heard of what urban planning was until about three or four years into that job. And once I did, it was there was no looking back.

00;08;49;24 - 00;09;00;03

Emily Weidenhof

Hey, listeners, we hope you're enjoying this episode of our podcast. For those of you who are as enthusiastic about transportation and planning as we are, we'd like to hear from you.

00;09;00;05 - 00;09;10;29

Emily Weidenhof

You can submit topics and questions that you'd like us to cover at [N Y C. g o v forward slash curb enthusiasm](https://www.nyc.gov/forward). And now back to our conversation.

00;09;11;01 - 00;09;38;00

Emily Weidenhof

So we're going to dive a little bit into your expertise in cycling. You for decades have worked to plan, design, implement and evolve, bicycle infrastructure in a whole range of complex contexts. Could you talk a little bit about the biggest challenges you see right now for rolling out bicycle infrastructure in cities?

00;09;38;00 - 00;09;57;26

Ryan Russo

Yeah. Well, the first one, I have three, is a little bit self-serving because we have our Urban Bikeway Design Guide third edition coming out. I do think it's a challenge to document and lift up best practices as like to get them spreading, quickly around so that we can learn. I know that when you're, again, a busy public servant, you kind of have your head down.

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Ryan Russo

You're cranking out your projects, and how do you get that information, you know, from, oh, Seattle tried this thing. Let's try that here. That worked out really well. The second biggest challenge is really envisioning the, the improvement and getting the buy in sort of a broad based buy in. And, you know, a lot of times communities, business owners really are inherently a little scared of the change that might come with a full redesign.

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Ryan Russo

So, but fortunately, we've learned over time that once projects go in, they tend to be quite popular and they sort of build a snowball of momentum. So it's really important to have that leadership to take that first step or to take those first steps and then really stick to, the vision that is possible. I think a barrier, you know, I've talked about this already, but just like what I saw in the last local government I worked at and a lot of our members is just having, really good people in local government to do the work.

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Ryan Russo

I think, you know, we're in a broader environment with trust eroding, between people and government, it started at the federal level, you know, 40 years ago. It it's gone down to the states, and now it's happening at the local level, where the last level of government, where you see this trust level eroding and, you know, if you want to build a bike network, you need strong people who have great training, who are supported, who reflect the communities that, they're serving.

00;11;24;23 - 00;11;41;03

Ryan Russo

And I think the, you know, a city council person who says, oh, let's build a bike network or a new mayor often doesn't think that, like, really what I need to do is, is staff up and support and agency, and fill their vacancies in order to get a bike network built.

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Emily Weidenhof

So what are also some emerging trends that you think, cities and bicycle planners should, should keep in mind for, for the future?

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Ryan Russo

Yeah. Well, certainly we've got a diverse set of vehicles now that are out on the road. So it's not just, you know, a standard bicycle. We've got electric assist, we've got cargo bikes, family bikes. And I think, you know, New York's been quite innovative in widening its, bike lanes. It's something we've reflected in our new urban bikeway design guide that we're quite excited about.

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Shawn Macias

So, Ryan, as you mentioned, the third edition of NAC T O's Urban Bike Design Guide is set to be released in January. Are there any particular elements to it that you're excited to share, you know, with the general public?

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Ryan Russo

Yeah. Super excited. So just, you know, stepping back, the first version of the Urban Bikeway design Guide was really this permission slip for cities to do, you know, protected bike lanes for the first time.

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Ryan Russo

And we saw cities adopt it aggressively. And, it really served as a kit of parts. Like this is the thing you need to build your bikeways. It wasn't the how to manual that is really needed. And so this bike guide is that how to manual. So the design details of which there are tremendous the inspiration the visuals that you come to expect from an NAC TO guide are all there.

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Ryan Russo

But we also have kind of the steps and the elements and the ingredients that you need to build successful, not just bike projects, but bike networks, because we all know you're not going to get the ridership that we want to see and that we know is possible in our cities without providing complete networks. So, you know, we really start with, leadership and the vision that's needed.

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Ryan Russo

And, we saw the bike guide when the first and second editions came out that, mayor, city council people, it had the effect we want, they would find it, say it was beautiful. They would come to the city agency and say, why can't we have this? And it's like, well, we do want to build this. And we would go, you know, cities would go and try to try to figure that out.

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Ryan Russo

But now there is kind of the reverse when, when they say, why can't we have this or can we have this? There are elements that are sort of a to do list, even for leadership to make sure that you have, you know, the people in place, the policy in place, the engagement strategies in place, the planning and, and, design and delivery mechanisms in place, you know, do you have the contracts, and then are you evaluating so that you can learn and build your network over time?

00;14;13;01 - 00;14;23;06

Ryan Russo

So really putting it all together and laying out that vision for, how do we get complete networks that can serve, you know, people of all ages and abilities?

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Emily Weidenhof

Is there a new audience here hoping this bikeway design guide will reach? Anyone you want to encourage to take a look beyond, city officials?

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Ryan Russo

Yeah, I think there's the leadership side of things.

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Ryan Russo

We want mayors and city council people to, of course, see it and pick it up. And again, not just ask, their, their departments of transportation to do this. There's a to do list for them, but all the way on the other side, you know, the maintenance folks, the operations folks, we've learned how important, you know, those things are.

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Ryan Russo

And downstream in the, in the process, so you know, someone's giving permits out for construction management. We've got construction guidance. We've got, you know, how to keep your bike lanes, you know, clean and clear. So it's kind of a broader, broader set of audiences

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Shawn Macias

That makes a lot of sense. You know, those interconnected networks is what really gets the modes to shifts and gets people out of cars. And, you know, potentially onto a bike.

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Emily Weidenhof

Transportation and culture are very intertwined. Having worked on the East Coast, the West Coast and now nationally, what are some cultural nuances that you have picked up and how does that shape your, communication and public engagement around transportation planning?

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Ryan Russo

Yeah. Well, in terms of kind of the practices I've seen on different coasts, our city, Oakland, and I think other cities on the West Coast, we're really excellent at starting to embed equity into the planning process for developing bike networks to really, not really calling for equal outreach amongst the whole city, but to target neighborhoods that were impacted by redlining, the building of the

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Ryan Russo

interstate system, and to sort of say these communities in which have strong reason to distrust government, need to be a part of our transportation planning and a part of the kind of repair for those past wrongs. And so our bike plan, we had, you know, paid community based organizations, we were focused on the development of those, neighborhoods.

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Ryan Russo

And we really learned a lot and pivoted the plan to, to elevate their priorities, which led to a lot of statewide, funding for not just the development of a bike network, but investment dollars that would also come with repaving streets and calming traffic and achieving lots of the goals that that the community had. And, you know, I think, we've talked about this already, but, on the East Coast in a lot of more strong mayor type governance formats, which, you know, play a huge part in how things play out.

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Ryan Russo

There's, I think, a little bit more acceptance of the role of leadership that communities elect city council people and mayors to, to make, make decisions, and that you don't necessarily need, you know, perfect consensus to move forward. And I think, you know, there's ways to kind of borrow from both of those that all sort of planning and policy cultures could, could borrow from and, and make sure they're correctly calibrated so that we're doing the most important thing, which is making progress.

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Ryan Russo

I think there's, you know, a lot of frustration with the status quo. People don't like congestion. They don't like the lack of safety. And so we need to be figuring out ways to bring the change that we know people want to see.

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Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, I think one of the, both big challenges, but also what makes this work so exciting in the transportation field is needing to navigate across a lot of different scales.

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Emily Weidenhof

So you're talking about both keeping the larger network in mind while also really engaging deeply with communities at that kind of hyper local scale. And there are plenty of gradients in between that. Could you maybe talk about some examples or, you know, a personal win of really negotiating between these scales and kind of balancing all of that, the different scales in a design and kind of achieving a cohesive outcome?

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Ryan Russo

Yeah, I mean, I, I'm really excited, I feel like we should continue to lift up the street ambassador program that I, work with some of your colleagues on to help launch about you know, really meeting folks where they are in the process of developing a neighborhood bike network that recognize that, you know, cycling has a citywide need, and then you need to meet regional connections.

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Ryan Russo

But to figure out how we do that, citywide, we need to do that with the kind of the wisdom of, of the community who are experiencing the streets every day. So talking to people, in places that aren't your traditional, community meeting in an evening where everyone gets two minutes to speak, has been was something I think that worked really well and seems to be working, continuing to work well.

00;19;12;07 - 00;19;36;21

Ryan Russo

And we've seen those community engagement best practices, spread to other places. And, you know, we duplicated some of those in Oakland in some of our projects and providing people food at community meetings or childcare, seeing that, but the message being, we are adopting a bike plan. We are changing our streets. We need your input into it.

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Ryan Russo

How to do that? Where to do that? What's the what are the priorities as we develop the plan, search for funding? And those priorities can come from the community. It's not it's not a whether we're going to, do these things or not. It's how are we going to do these things together?

00;19;54;08 - 00;20;09;23

Shawn Macias

Yeah. What's been great is you can get that buy in from the community pretty, pretty early on when you are asking them where they want to see these types of investments, rather than bringing a plan that already has the ideas kind of cooked, this way, you know, folks are included and feel like they have a sense

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Shawn Macias

and what's happening, which is was a good place to start.

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Emily Weidenhof

Are there certain metrics or benefits of projects that you feel are missing and you would love to see more, cities and planners focus on, looking into to help make the case for, for these types of improvements.

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Ryan Russo

Well, I think we've gotten better over time at developing metrics.

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Ryan Russo

I think that sometimes, we are just focused on the usage. I think we could, we could, you know, track our, our process and our engagement and sort of tell stories about how much, how much planning we've done, to, to get there. I think there's a lot of technology that's helping us, with metrics.

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Ryan Russo

And it's interesting, the digital twins that are out there that can be more predictive and give people more tools, and sort of, automate things for, for people. But, you know, all of it. There's a whole world of kind of big data and software that people want to sell you all in the cities. But it all comes down to kind of storytelling.

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Ryan Russo

And I think we need to kind of we always need to be bringing it back and building it back up to the story that we're telling.

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Emily Weidenhof

Yeah. And I think that's something you've said before, which is that while we are focused on rebalancing our streets, maybe with pedestrian and cyclist priority to not leave out all the other people who are also benefiting from these improvements.

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Emily Weidenhof

A lot of times these improvements are good for drivers too. So yeah,

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Ryan Russo

Absolutely. And yeah, that's been a point I've been making. I actually got the opportunity to teach urban planners and, one of the key messages that, and I think that we can, you know, bring to the work is to think about the people most skeptical of your project and really tailor your messages to them, and not just a message to actually listen.

00;22;08;02 - 00;22;31;19

Ryan Russo

I think it's really important that, you know, planners and city agencies bring a humility to the work that they there's something to be learned from, from someone who's resistant to the change, who has a concern. And, I do think ultimately, like the work that's being done can address that concern. It's just often where we come with sort of preconceived notions of what their concerns are.

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Ryan Russo

And sometimes that's the safety message. You know, yes, these quarter redesigns that come with bike lanes improve, safety for all users. But if the users that are skeptical don't necessarily feel unsafe, that might not be a message that that resonates. So maybe it is more this mobility message that a multimodal transportation system where lots of people have choices.

00;22;55;00 - 00;23;06;06

Ryan Russo

You might not necessarily choose, you know, the sped up bus for your transportation or the bike lane for your transportation, but you're going to benefit from the fact that a good number of your neighbors do.

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Shawn Macias

I like that message, to bring humility to these conversations. Right. There's always something to learn from everybody who takes the time to show up at these meetings.

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Ryan Russo

Absolutely.

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Shawn Macias

Cities across the United States are investing millions in resiliency projects to combat climate change. However, some residents still don't support those investments. What do you see as the missing connection there? How can we gain more buy-in?

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Ryan Russo

I think we're in the trench warfare that you are all in or cities are in for the right of way.

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Ryan Russo

The climate message isn't necessarily like the top line message or the most effective message to get the skeptical community members on board. And as much as we know that, you know, mode shifted transportation network is better for the long term, is better for the climate, like ultimately it's also better for to support local businesses to help people with their individual mobility, to help them meet their daily needs, to help them, spend less money on transportation so that they can afford the rent that's going up.

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Ryan Russo

I think I think the, the work we're doing in cities has this, like, very immediate, practical need that it meets. And I think it's really important to connect the work to that need that people have.

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Emily Weidenhof

Definitely. So micromobility is an incredibly quick evolving, industry, changing the landscape dramatically for our streets. Could you talk a little bit about the greatest challenges that you're seeing micromobility, and transportation planning and design, as well as where you think we need to go. What is the vision of streets that include, this quickly evolving mode?

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Emily Weidenhof

00;24;55;08 - 00;25;11;07

Ryan Russo

Yeah. So, you know, NACTO follows the shared micromobility industry very closely. We have, shared micromobility snapshot, which has all the data that you've seen in the shared scooter and bike, that are happening in North America.

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Ryan Russo

And I encourage everyone to check out that snapshot. You know, we know that urban trips are short. You know, the vast majority are well under three miles. And so there's a tremendous potential for mode shift. And we've seen that adoption. But there's some challenges that I think we are maturing. And we and we see the barriers and we need to be thinking about those barriers.

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Ryan Russo

You know, trip chaining is both a barrier and an opportunity. You know, women often have to do more trip chaining than men, and the ability to switch from one mode to the other and be able to leave the vehicle in a shared micromobility setting is, something that's points to the use of growing use of micromobility.

00;25;51;09 - 00;26;20;04

Ryan Russo

But if there's no ability to put your children or groceries or other things that you have with them on the, on the vehicle, then that limits it. And it's something that we should be thinking about. Of course, there's tremendous opportunity with the parking and maintenance that goes away. That's taken care of by the operator with, shared micromobility and that's a tremendous value for people who are living in small apartments, or, you know, can't afford the ownership of a vehicle.

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Ryan Russo

But what one of the trends that we are seeing and calling out is that there are affordability issues for sort of, middle, middle class, low income people in these services, you know, for them to continue to be financially viable. They're mostly privately operated without a significant amount of public support compared to other modes of transportation. We're finding the affordability issues are a real barrier to the growth.

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Ryan Russo

So that's something we need, cities to be thinking about as we have visions for this industry. And in the last thing is that, as we densify, and the density that cities provide, that's a really key element, to ultimately that to the viability of shared micromobility.

00;27;02;12 - 00;27;10;14

Shawn Macias

Yeah, that's a really good point. In your opinion, what is the biggest breach of subway etiquette?

00;27;10;16 - 00;27;13;03

Ryan Russo

Ones that I do or ones that other people do?

00;27;13;05 - 00;27;16;28

Shawn Macias

I'll take both. Honestly. But yeah, I'd love to hear.

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Ryan Russo

Well, my personal one is I did have some back issues a year ago, so I often find myself stretching on the subway, which I think is makes me like I get those sort of either sideways looks or, I'm not going to look up from my phone while this crazy guy stretches his hamstrings in the middle of the subway.

00;27;37;13 - 00;27;54;23

Ryan Russo

But in terms of the one that drives me crazy the most is the not moving to the center of a of a crowded train when there's the there's the area near the doors and it's clearly very full. And there's one person at the beginning of that hallway, that aisle, who doesn't kind of move in and provide that room.

00;27;54;23 - 00;28;02;12

Ryan Russo

And then there's, you know, some people left on the platform when the door is closed. That totally could have could have fit. That's my biggest pet peeve.

00;28;02;18 - 00;28;13;07

Shawn Macias

I feel that same frustration when you step into the car and it's crowded at the door and you look down and it's just barren in the center. Yeah. Yeah, that certainly frustrates me as well.

00;28;13;10 - 00;28;26;07

Shawn Macias

My mind personally, is anyone playing Candy Crush without headphones? Just the chiming in, the dinging it, you know, 8:15, 8:30 in the morning is not what I'm looking for in a commute.

00;28;26;09 - 00;28;29;23

Ryan Russo

Yeah. Time for some earplugs. Yeah,

00;28;29;25 - 00;28;40;12

Emily Weidenhof

Yeah, I continue to be in awe, that the general concept of you've got to empty something to fill something up is, is not fully understood.

00;28;40;13 - 00;28;43;16

Emily Weidenhof

So just, you know, let people off before you get on.

00;28;43;19 - 00;29;00;14

Ryan Russo

Yeah. Well, now there's, I've ridden the new trains and there's fewer seats because they're made for wider doors to address the standing in the doorway, staring at your phone, not getting out of way. Problem. They've widened the doors, which is helpful for in and out.

00;29;00;14 - 00;29;03;10

Ryan Russo

But it means there's fewer seats for everyone.

00;29;03;12 - 00;29;06;25

Emily Weidenhof

Still some bunching at the doors too, I've noticed, yeah.

00;29;07;02 - 00;29;08;19

Shawn Macias

Certainly.

00;29;08;22 - 00;29;20;19

Emily Weidenhof

All right, Ryan, and to close us out, a question we'd like to ask all of our guests. What is something about the future of transportation that you are most enthusiastic about?

00;29;20;21 - 00;29;38;03

Ryan Russo

Well, I've got a nerdy one which is, you know, really the growth of dev data and evidence based decision making in cities to, to give out the limited resources that each city has, whether you're New York City or, or small city somewhere, you know, it's all about priorities.

00;29;38;03 - 00;30;01;07

Ryan Russo

Your values go in kind of what you do. And yes, we're democratic and we listen to the public, and it's very important. But we don't want to just have the squeaky wheel get the grease. And NACTO has been trying to lift up a lot of the best practices of using data and

evidence based practices to make sure those safety improvements that traffic calming go to where the problem is biggest.

00;30;01;10 - 00;30;21;20

Ryan Russo

I have another one that's a little more big picture maybe in that, you know, I think at this moment we're being reminded that cities are places where we connect, whether we understand one another, even with our differences. And then ultimately, they're places where we find our joy. And then also a bit on the policy wonk side.

00;30;21;20 - 00;30;43;10

Ryan Russo

I mean, I think our transportation work, we don't connect to this as much. There is a national crisis of housing affordability, and there's growing consensus and understanding that we need to build more housing in our cities, and then we need to build more densely and allow apartment buildings to get built. But the next question, the reason why we haven't been building it is, well, what about the parking and what about the traffic?

00;30;43;10 - 00;31;00;07

Ryan Russo

If all those people and all those apartments come with cars and people driving in them, what are we going to do? And you all, the N A C T O members, the cities around the country, the transportation departments, you are the you were the answers. You have the answers. And that's the multimodal transportation system that that you all are trying to build.

00;31;00;07 - 00;31;01;21

Ryan Russo

And that excites me a lot.

00;31;01;23 - 00;31;15;00

Emily Weidenhof

Great. Fantastic. Definitely something we continue to partner with our colleagues across city agencies to try to solve these issues together. Because you can't do it in isolation for sure.

00;31;15;02 - 00;31;16;16

Ryan Russo

Absolutely.

00;31;16;18 - 00;31;22;17

Emily Weidenhof

All right. Well, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it. And we'll see you out there.

00;31;22;22 - 00;31;27;11

Ryan Russo

All right. Thanks for having me. It's a real honor to be here.

00;31;27;13 - 00;31;48;22

Ydanis Rodriguez

Hi. My name is Ydanis Rodriguez, commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. Thank you for listening to Curb Enthusiasm by New York City DOT. This episode was produced by Michael Santos with video support from Sigurjon Gudjonsson, Juan Vega, and Nazareth Battice. Theme music by Michael Santos. Curb Enthusiasm is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other major streaming platforms.

00;31;48;25 - 00;32;06;09

Ydanis Rodriguez

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