What makes a neighbourhood bikeable?
Focus groups with Vancouver cyclists
Meghan Winters, Kay Teschke
School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Canada

Background
The great differences in cycling rates between European and North American cities (10-30% mode share versus 1-3%) has been attributed to city design, cycling infrastructure, governmental policies, and also cultural differences. While certain European cities clearly demonstrate conditions supportive for cycling, North American urban design may command a different prescription for what makes a bikeable city.

Methods
We conducted focus groups with regular cyclists, occasional cyclists, potential cyclists, and a group of cycling advocates in Metro Vancouver, Canada. The guided discussions focused on which neighbourhood characteristics are conducive for cycling and specifically why and how these factors were influential.

Other ideas

Safe Storage, End of Trip Facilities
- Safe/secure places to store bicycles, end of trip facilities at work places

Aesthetic Appeal
- Park settings, good views or places feel connected to nature

Road Condition
- Shoulders of roads need to be better maintained; bike lanes have potholes, garbage and gravel

Driver and Cyclist Education
- Both drivers and cyclists need a clear understanding of the rules of the road

Helmet Legislation
- Helmet laws are viewed as a disincentive for many

Conclusions
"Bikeability" has a complex definition dependant on the traveler’s purpose and experience level. These focus groups provide a wealth of information on the experience of traveling by bicycle in the region, not only from those committed inner city commuters but also from cyclists in suburban areas, from those traveling with children, and from those new to cycling. In a city with low cycling rates compared to its European counterparts, this project gives direction on how transportation planners can work within our city’s framework to create a place better for cycling.

Acknowledgements: This research was funded by the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research & Translink (the regional transportation authority).