

I get angry when attempts to make spaces more friendly for active transportation and public transit are opposed by people saying “what about disabled people?”

<https://twitter.com/scisus/status/1301932957536415744>

Susannah Tysor @scisus

I get angry when attempts to make spaces more friendly for active transportation and public transit are opposed by people saying “what about disabled people?”

yes, what about disabled people? The ones who can't drive and still want to leave their homes?

The ones who need wider sidewalks and less curbs for their wheelchairs? The ones who need wider bike lanes and more and different racks for their non-standard cycles? The ones who can't walk along most arterial streets because of sensitivity to sound or air pollution?

The ones who need compact development so they can get around without getting exhausted? The ones who need plenty of public areas it's comfortable and safe to rest in?

Cars are essential mobility devices for most people because we've built our cities badly and they will remain essential mobility devices for many for a long time to come.

What would it mean to support cars as assistive devices in an environment built for people instead of cars?

If we treated cars like the assistive devices they are to many people we'd have 80% less parking, parking wouldn't be surrounded by curbs, and speed limits for cars in towns and cities would be limited to 20kph.

So when you say we can't keep reduced parking at Stanley Park because “what about disabled people” but aren't fighting for curb cuts and accessible pathways in the park, I don't believe you.

Or when you say that we can't keep the new bikeways in the park because “what about disabled people” but aren't fighting for sea wall pathways that accommodate wheelchairs and trikes, I don't believe you.

If your opposition to cycling infrastructure was about disabled people, you'd be fighting for cars with smaller footprints, easy to get in and out of, that had built in speed governors, good visibility, speed limits of 20kph, and were sharing space with cyclists.

You'd be fighting for less parking, compact development with accessible housing, strict noise, air, and light pollution rules, wide wide sidewalks with paving that didn't rattle the bones of anyone with wheels, businesses to all have accessible entrances and seating and washrooms

Maybe you aren't being disingenuous when you say “what about disabled people?” to fight cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Maybe you're well-meaning, but ignorant. If this thread was useful, please read more disabled people writing about moving + living in cities.

*Dave Campbell @Derailuer Replying to @scisus*

This is a useful reminder that there are many disabilities that need to be prioritized in street design. Thank you  
Folded hands

*Susannah Tysor @scisus*

You are welcome! Car oriented infrastructure is really inaccessible for me personally, so I'm pretty invested in changes that minimize the need for cars while leaving space for those that do need them.

*Joan @grungygranny Replying to @scisus*

If we make our built environment work for disabled people then it will also work for the able bodied is a pretty good principle to work from. LTNs should help with this. I suspect it's just used as a excuse by many anti LTN people

*@heystaceykay Replying to @scisus*

people argue FOR cars/parking spaces “for” disabled people?! this is the worst take!

*Transport Research @transportdata Replying to @scisus*

Yes, many people use this argument in a disingenuous way. Some purport to be advocates, and some are advocates and/or disabled themselves.

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Just as with any other group of humans, there are disability advocates who hate the idea of infrastructure bicycling and walking.

*Stephen Mc Lean @Ste\_Mc\_Lea* Replying to @scisus

Two words, they're "concern trolling"...

I would have much more respect if they told the truth and said "I want to drive and park wherever the f\*#! I want, then I want to hug my car good night, every night".

*Chalkitdown @chalkitdown* Replying to @scisus

Most people who do this (at least on Twitter) don't give two shites about the disabled. It's usually concern trolling from able-bodied motorists who don't want their parking spaces taken away. When they have nothing left, they play the 'what about the disabled' card.

*Jeanne Merchant @jsoniatmerchant* Replying to @scisus

Thank you for this fantastic thread. We've vacationed to places w/ great people-focused infra like bike lanes for past few years. What we notice? More people of all abilities using it: older people, folks using non-standard bikes, people of all shapes/sizes. It frees a community.

*Susannah Tysor @scisus* ·

Yes it really can! But we have to make sure that everyone really can access it - that the nearby housing and businesses aren't excluding broad swaths of people.

*Replying to @scisus*

My mother, who uses a Manual wheelchair, constantly complains about broken and too-narrow sidewalks.

I also witnessed a driver honk at a wheelchair riding in a travel lane bc the nearby sidewalk was - too narrow.

*Gwen @girlon4wheels3* Replying to @scisus

I'll add my take on this. I live on top of a hill (not by choice) where I can't get to the bus stop. Can't afford expensive electric wheelchair device like this. Can't take the train either (got forgotten on it 3 times had to pull the emergency) so for me my car is my lifeline

*Susannah Tysor @scisus*

Yep! We've got a lot of work to do to make driving a choice rather than a necessity for most. Some of that is how we organize our cities, a lot of it is undoing the dramatic inequality in wealth (and the deliberate impoverishing of many disabled people.)

Please continue.

*Vicky @graymalk* Replying to @scisus

I just don't see cycle infra as anti-disabled. People using wheelchairs and assistive scooters much prefer paved paths. So anyone who makes the "what about disabled" argument at me just gets a laugh. They've displayed their ignorance.

*Susannah Tysor @scisus*

Cycling infras can certainly be bad for or at the expense of disabled people depending on how it's implemented and where it's prioritized. I'm complaining about those who block AT with "what about the disabled" but really mean "I want the road to myself and my giant speeding car"