

REVIEW

TECHNICAL HANDBOOK OF BIKEWAY DESIGN

(Vélo Québec, 2003)

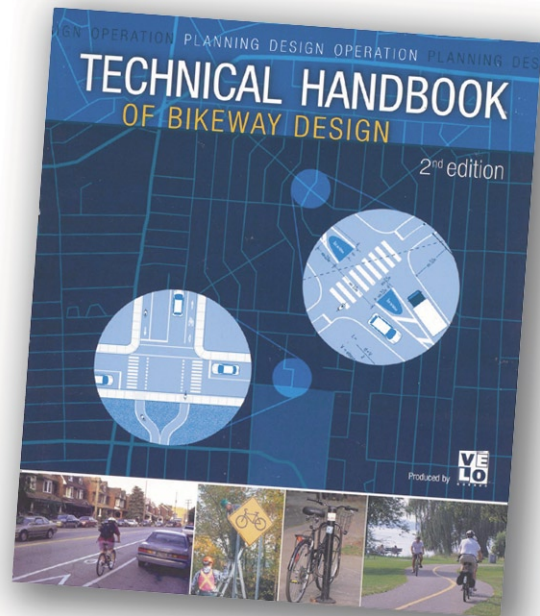
BY MIA LAYNE BIRK

Two admissions, in the interest of honesty: 1) My parents were born and raised in Montreal, so I have a special affection for the place, and 2) I have been involved in the writing of numerous bikeway design guidelines of late. The most interesting of these have been “innovative” or “supplemental” design guidelines for the State of Minnesota and the City/County of San Francisco, both of which were intended to cover what the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Guide to the Development of Bicycle Facilities* and the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) leave out.

Others, for various cities and counties in the Western U.S., have been more typical design guidelines, largely based on AASHTO's *Guide*, Chapter 1000 of the California DOT's *Highway Design Manual*, and the Oregon DOT *Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*. Still other design guides have been specific to individual trail or roadway corridors, focusing on environmental sensitivity, landscaping, or other details.

The 2nd edition of Vélo Québec's *Technical Handbook of Bikeway Design* (2003) covers ground familiar to bikeway planning professionals. Nicely laid out, written, and illustrated, it is a good first stop for bikeway planners and designers. It includes an overview of bicycling, types of bikeways, and planning. It succinctly covers the basics of geometric bikeway design, construction issues, multi-use trails, bike parking, bicycles and public transit, and maintenance/operation.

It offers insights into some of the increasingly used innovative treatments that are not yet covered by AASHTO. Given that Canada is not obliged to follow the AASHTO *Guide*, I was hopeful that the Québec guide would offer more specificity and guidance on these treatments. For example, on pp. 55, 67 and 76, it discusses the use of colored markings, noting that blue offers



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good contrast at night. (Montreal has found blue markings to be beneficial at parallel path/roadway crossings.) But under what circumstances should we use color? Everywhere or just in conflict zones?

On p. 67 it discusses contraflow bike lanes, with a diagram showing a contraflow lane on a one-way street with 2 sides of parking. The conflicts with a bike lane in an opposing direction to motor vehicle travel and parking should be discussed.

On p. 68, the concept of advanced stop line/bike boxes is introduced. I'd like to see more on this, including basic guidance as to when this should be used. I'd also like to see more on bicycle boulevards (p. 64), as the concept has already been used in Montreal and is an increasing opportunity, particularly in the older parts of Montreal and other cities with connected street grids.

I like the fact that it calls for bringing the bike lane up to crosswalks instead of dropping them (p. 55.) I like the conceptual discussion of signage (p. 92), although my experience has been that signage plans tend to be complicated and challenging to implement. Again, more detail would be helpful. The discussion on traffic lights for cyclists (pp. 94-96) is good information, and the section on bringing bicycles on taxis (p. 115) is interesting.

All in all, this handbook is a good addition to our field. Vélo Québec is one of the leaders, acting as both advocates and professionals in an impressive manner. As our field continues to evolve, we need to push ourselves to provide more detail, specificity, and innovation.

When we design things on the ground, we frequently get hung up on the details of a complex intersection, interchange, boulevard or roadway with a pinch point, railroad-trail crossing, environmentally-sensitive trail location, or other specific situation not covered by general guidelines. That's when it gets interesting. That's when we put our experience, creativity, and knowledge to the real test.

Mia Birk has 14 years experience in the transportation field, focused on energy-efficient and environmentally-sensitive planning, design and implementation. She is an Adjunct Professor at Portland State University, teaching Pedestrian and Bicycle Issues for Masters' students in urban planning. As a consultant, she has developed over 60 bicycle, pedestrian, trail, and corridor plans. While at the City of Portland (1993-1999), she developed Portland's Bicycle Master Plan and managed the public process, design and implementation of over 160 miles of new bikeways, thousands of bicycle parking spaces, and a bikeway maintenance program. She is a frequent contributor to bicycle- and pedestrian-related publications and has spoken at dozens of conferences.

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