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Using the Hive Mind to Make Biking Safer

by [Sarah Goodyear](#) on June 2, 2009

Whenever anyone asks me why I like Twitter so much, I tell them it's about the information. If you follow the right people (and who that is obviously depends entirely on you) you can tap into an amazing amount of great stuff from around the Internet (and real life too). It's like having a custom-made news feed filtered through some very intelligent, and idiosyncratic, human brains.

Yesterday, one of the people we follow on the [Streetsblog Network Twitter account](#), [@zaneselvans](#), let us know via Twitter about a very cool project from the [Cascade Bicycle Club](#) called [Bikewise](#). The site collects and maps user-generated reports of bike crashes, hazards and thefts from around the country:



We started **bikewise** in the conviction that we could make biking safer and more fun by gathering good data on the things that sometimes go wrong.

Crashes: It's estimated that 75% or more of all crashes go unreported. We believe that by gathering detailed information on how and why crashes happen, we'll be able to ride smarter. Also, we hope that knowing where crash hotspots are will help us to identify issues with traffic behavior and road design.

Hazards: How many times have you ridden past a dangerous sewer grate or overgrown vegetation and wished there were someplace to report it? Now there is. We aim to not only collect hazard reports, but to pass these on to the appropriate authorities. (Please note: we're still putting this part of the system in place.)

Thefts: Tracking where and how bikes get stolen is a key part of making preventing thefts. We're currently working on other pieces of this system, so that if your bike does get stolen, you have a better chance of getting it back. More to come on that.

Obviously, such a site is only as good as the information it collects and what is done with it once it's in the system. The [SeeClickFix](#) service has demonstrated that this kind of software initiative can help local governments get problems solved. Bikewise's success will depend on the participation of people who are committed to improving biking conditions, and interested in the possibilities of the Internet-based [hive mind](#). Maybe you're one of them.

Another news flash from Twitter: [@USDOT](#) is on, as of yesterday. We're happy to report that we were one of the first three follows they made. The other two were [@T4America](#) and [@whitehouse](#).