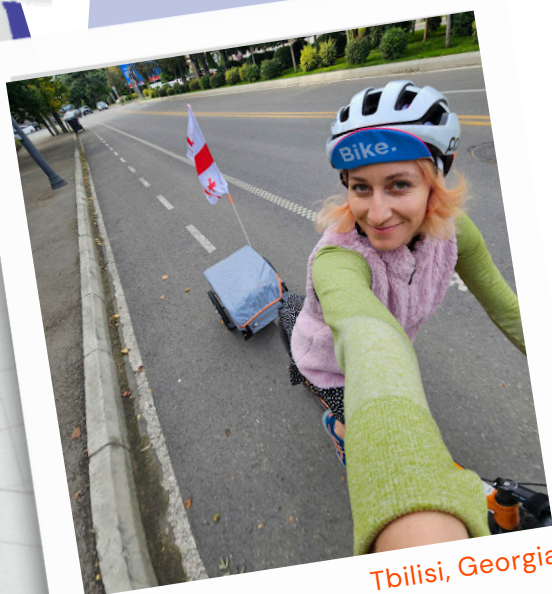


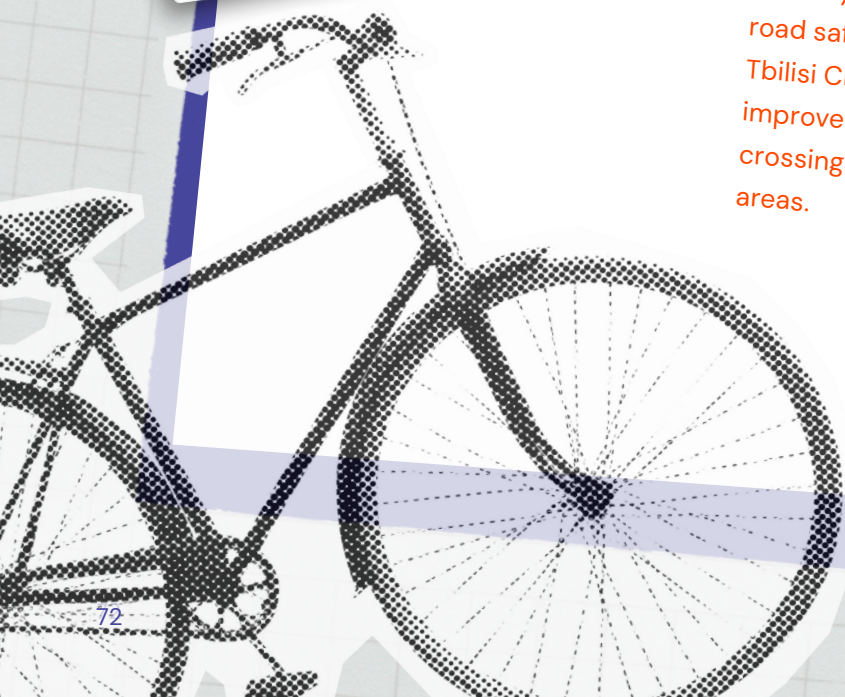
# Mar

# Mikhelidze



Tbilisi, Georgia

Since 2014, Mar has been using a bicycle as her primary means of transportation in Tbilisi, which led her to recognize the many challenges pedestrians and cyclists face when seeking safety, comfort, and recognition on the city's streets. Since 2019, she has collaborated with various teams to advocate for cycling and to show how cities improve when they support cyclists. Mar co-founded the Caucasus Cycling Network to organize cycling events such as competitions, tours, road safety meetings, and activities for European Mobility Week. She also helped develop a Georgian-language bike guiding program and is one of its instructors. In 2022, Mar joined the global Bicycle Mayor Network and has since visited more than 25 schools as the Bicycle Mayor of Tbilisi. Her main focus is road safety, and she has worked closely with Tbilisi City Hall to advocate for infrastructure improvements, such as adding pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, and traffic lights in critical areas.





Transport systems can be considered inclusive only if...

... it is affordable for all users, no matter what income a person has or what his or her social status is. Women often are caregivers, they have to take kids to school, or kindergarten or anywhere else. So, the transport system should be accessible with good coverage of the territory. Girls say Tbilisi, where I'm coming from: "seats are too close to each other; transport is crowded; Not clean enough; Long waiting time, like 30-40 minutes." Transport systems should be planned considering this and other comments.

If I was in power of our transport systems, the first thing I would do is...

... restore railway traffic in the east & south part of Georgia. This change will make it possible to use less private cars & give the possibility to everybody, to travel from one place to another comfortably. Now there are so many traffic accidents and this change could help. Second, what I'd change if I could – prioritize public transport, make buses more efficient and make more people use them. If I was in charge of our

transport systems, I'd include cycling in every new project, to create a more cycling-friendly environment. For example, renovation of streets or roads between towns/cities, crossings etc.

How does the current transport situation in your city influence your work?

I think it depends on the district, where the person lives, but in general the situation is difficult. Parked cars on the sidewalk, no sidewalk or crossings, walkways are underground or on bridges instead of on street crossings. That creates problems for caregivers with strollers, people with disabilities, elderly people, kids, who want to use bicycles or roller skates.

For girls, dark underground crossings are horrible, especially at night. From my perspective, infrastructure often says to people with disabilities: there is no place for you. And to the kids and elderly people: stay home, not safe to walk outside.

When I see all this, it makes me motivated and I feel that I can change my reality in a good way: create a better city for everybody.





My work aligns with the  
Hamburg Charter Principles!

Principle #5 Accessible and  
Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Investments should focus on safe, climate-resilient walking, cycling, shared modes, public transport, and rail infrastructure, with a fully functioning disaster management system to address climate challenges.



What's the main challenge that you face in  
your daily work?

My work involves close communication and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including city hall, the Ministry of Infrastructure, police departments, schoolteachers, students, and others. In many cases, interactions with government institutions can be challenging, as responses are often brief or dismissive. When feedback is provided, it is not uncommon to hear remarks such as "We are not Paris" or "This is Georgia—don't expect better," which can hinder constructive dialogue.

Unfortunately, road safety enforcement remains insufficient, leading to tragic incidents. In light of such events, it becomes particularly difficult to promote the benefits of cycling to the public, despite its many advantages.

Why is it important to listen to young people?

First of all, young people know what they need: How they want to move, where and etc. They

are the future of the country and it's the place where they will continue to live after their parents, if this place will be nice enough. They can have amazing ideas! And you can find out if you listen. Young people are braver and have more receptivity to new things.

What would you tell other young people  
working in the transport field?

Try to create sustainable, eco-friendly, human-friendly transport systems. Transport is not just a thing, but biggest component on persons life – you can make it easier or torture them everyday. Consider every perspective as possible and don't forget different needs and interests. Stay focused on safety, comfort and availability. (If boring people make you lose motivation, call me and I'll tell stories that make you continue stronger than before.)



