

TierneyLab Putting Ideas in Science to the Test

February 26, 2009, 12:58 PM Will a Car-Free Broadway Work?

By JOHN TIERNEY In 1997, one of my proposals was greeted with the usual thousand-silence.

Anyway, the idea went nowhere — until today. Mayor Bloomberg planned to announce that Broadway will become a pedestrian-only zone around Times Square and Herald Square, according to my colleagues William Neuman and Michael Barbaro.

Will it work? I'm biased, of course, and I can't claim I based that 1997 proposal on any rigorous analysis. But today there's a new tool for examining the proposal: a spreadsheet called the Balance Transportation Analyzer, or B.T.A.

I asked Mr. Komanoff to use the B.T.A. to calculate the impact on motor-vehicle traffic of the reported plan to close Broadway around Times Square. Here's the good news from his first round of calculations:

Figure that the proposal will slow motor vehicle traffic by an average of one-tenth of one percent (1 part per thousand), averaged throughout the Central Business District, i.e., a minuscule average impact.

He made these calculations based simply on how much road space drivers are giving up, and he notes that in this case average speeds might even increase because Broadway's intersections create so much problematic congestion as it is.

Almost anything that helps rebalance the street equation in favor of foot traffic is a positive step, and there is no better locale to do so than the city's most foot-congested district.

Mr. Komanoff and Ted Kheel, the lawyer and civic activist, have come up with an intriguing new plan for congestion pricing in Manhattan that I'll discuss in another post.

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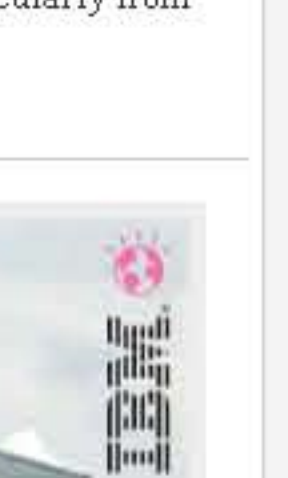
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John Tierney always wanted to be a scientist but went into journalism because its peer-review process was a great deal easier to sneak through.



With your help, he's using TierneyLab to check out new research and rethink conventional wisdom about science and society.

- 1. Just because an idea appeals to a lot of people doesn't mean it's wrong. 2. But that's a good working theory.

Comments and suggestions are welcome, particularly from researchers with new findings.



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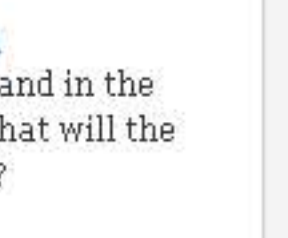
SURVEY Good Ideas Researchers at Duke University are looking for participants in an online study looking at ideas for improving the world.

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IN SCIENCE TIMES Corporate Backing for Research? Get Over It

Accusations of financial conflict of interest against the chairman of the U.N. climate panel sidelined substantive debate on scientific issues.



- The Madness of Crowds and an Internal Delusion Carpe Diem? Maybe Tomorrow Trusting Nature as the Climate Referee All Findings Columns

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April 19 Final Report from the Lab After three years of experiments, TierneyLab is shutting down.

April 19 Monday Puzzle: Thank You, John Monday Puzzle: Thank You, John moves to a new home in a new section of the online Times, under the title "Numberplay." It is time, then, to take a stroll down memory lane...

April 12 Does Obama Have the Right Stuff for Space? Does Obama Have the Right Stuff for Space? Where humans are going in space, and how should we get there?

April 12 Monday Puzzle: Birdbath Monday Puzzle: Birdbath Will the bird slide over and land in the water, or will it stay dry? What will the final position of the moon be?

March 22 Are Shoppers Fairer? Are Shoppers Fairer? Do markets and morality — as we like to reinforce one another?

Tag List

Table with 3 columns: Tag, Count, Count. Includes tags like PUZZLES, PSYCHOLOGY, GLOBAL WARMING, CLIMATE CHANGE, ASTRONOMY, PAN, FAT, MATHEMATICS, EVOLUTION, NASA, PHYSICS, BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS, SPACE, MARS, OPIOIDS.

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