

A BIKER'S PARADISE

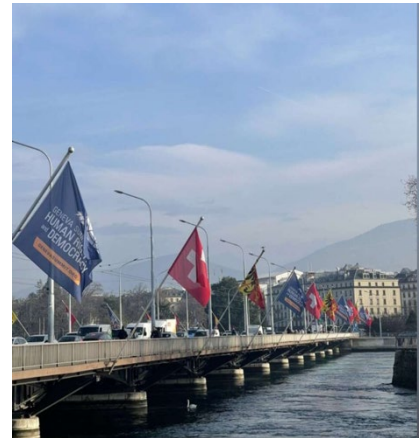
"Whether it is raining, or the sun is shining... as long as I am riding a bike, I know I am the luckiest guy in the world" - Racer Mark Cavendish.

Geneva, a small but fast-growing city in the heart of Europe, is facing increasing difficulties to build transportation infrastructure that can meet the demand. A recent popular vote to block a new pedestrian bridge across the inner harbor confronts transport planners with a problem. Should so much of the limited space be absorbed by car traffic or should more space be dedicated to alternative means of transport?

Constructed in 1903, the Mont Blanc bridge is the longest and largest bridge out of the seven bridges of Geneva. It is the most used and famous bridge in Geneva. Every day there is a significant amount of car traffic. The proposal to construct a new pedestrian and cycling bridge, next to the Mont-Blanc bridge as its importance.

The Mont-Blanc bridge, a vital link in Geneva

The Mont-Blanc bridge's importance is crucial for the city; it connects the two sides of the Geneva Lake; the roads Rue du Mont-Blanc and Quai Gustave-Ador. For tourists, it is a popular landmark that has many beautiful views. Historically, it shows the progression and development of Geneva over time. In addition, it is critical for public transportation, since the bridge is one of the main roads in their circuit maintaining an even flow in the city. On the bridge are multiple lanes: for cars, public transportation, and cyclists. Underneath the bridge are two underground footbridges that allow people to cross the Rhône without crossing the road.



The Mont-Blanc bridge from
Quai des Bergues ©Amandine
Balabeau (19.02.2025)

Geneva's transport growth

The city's transport system is under serious pressure as the city's population increases. In the 2000's, the population was only around 413 000 people and now it is growing rapidly. At the end of 2024, it hit around 640 000 people. Because of roads getting more packed, Geneva is losing space to fit in vehicles. Traffic jams and delays are more common on the roads of the city and are one of the main problems. The streets cannot handle any more vehicles and urgent solutions are needed. A better public transportation system could be made, more cycling and pedestrian infrastructures could be discussed, car-sharing could be also an idea to reduce the number of vehicles.

Cycling during Covid

During Covid-19, Geneva was one of the only cities in Switzerland that took many precautions and measures during lockdown. The Geneva municipal government decided that during the lockdown they would use the fact that nobody was outside to create new bike lanes that will be called "Covid Cycles Lanes". Cycling has increased significantly between July 2019 and July 2021, as over 60 000 people took part in cycling. Since 2019, trips by bike and foot have risen by 2,5%, but cars and public transports remain on top with 28,3% and 46,7%. The "Covid Cycle Lanes" permitted more space to provide distance and reduced spreading of infectious diseases. The "Covid cycle lanes " were promoted to make cycling easier and more practical, encouraging more people to bike to work rather than using polluting vehicles.

Rejection of the new bridge proposal

The vote of the new bridge was taken on the 24th of November 2024. The results showed 53,92% of participants had rejected the project and the other 46,08% supported the idea. It was rejected for several reasons. First for its cost being 54,6 million francs. Secondly for environmental reasons with possibilities it could damage some small ecosystems.

Alternative solutions for this project

Several solutions are possible. One option could be the construction of a cheaper bridge near the Mont-Blanc bridge. The proposal was mainly rejected because of its high cost. For this reason, a smaller and cheaper version of a bridge could be more affordable, and it would make this solution possible.

A second proposition would be the possibility of removing one of the lanes on the Mont-Blanc bridge. As the representative of the Pro Vélo Association states, there are five lanes for cars and a separate one for public transport. One car lane leads directly to the Chantepoulet road. This lane could be easily removed and be replaced by a special lane for pedestrians and cyclists. There are no obstacles that prevent that option. The main question is whether it would be politically fair to accept a reduction of a little space dedicated to cars. If this option would be made, simple and little adjustments would be necessary on both sides of the bridge for traffic fluidity.



AI image that shows the project of the new pedestrian and cycling bridge ©TDG, Ville de Genève, 2025

Another idea could be the construction of a bridge only for cars; there has already been a proposal to make either a bridge or a tunnel. However, this subject has been discussed for more than twenty years. In addition, the construction of this bridge would take approximately twenty years and the cost would be at least several billions and would be an enormous financial investment.

The pedestrian bridge is necessary to make enough space for all means of transport. The options are not realistic. Building a smaller and cheaper bridge isn't possible, because the bridge is already small enough and relatively cheap. The bridge or tunnel for cars would take way too much time and would cost way too much. The proposal could be resubmitted for a vote with a better explanation and an alternative option to remove a lane of traffic.

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