

Zero to 80,000 in Four Years Flat! BUDAPEST CRITICAL MASS



Greg Spencer, Bike Nerd | October 16, 2013



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

In this presentation:

- Quick history of Budapest Critical Mass
- Keys to its success
- Achievements
- Grand Finale
- Q and A



Quick history

- Origins in bike-messenger subculture of 1990s
- First service launched in Budapest in 1993
- 2001 Bike Messenger World Championships in held in Budapest



First Critical Mass – 2004

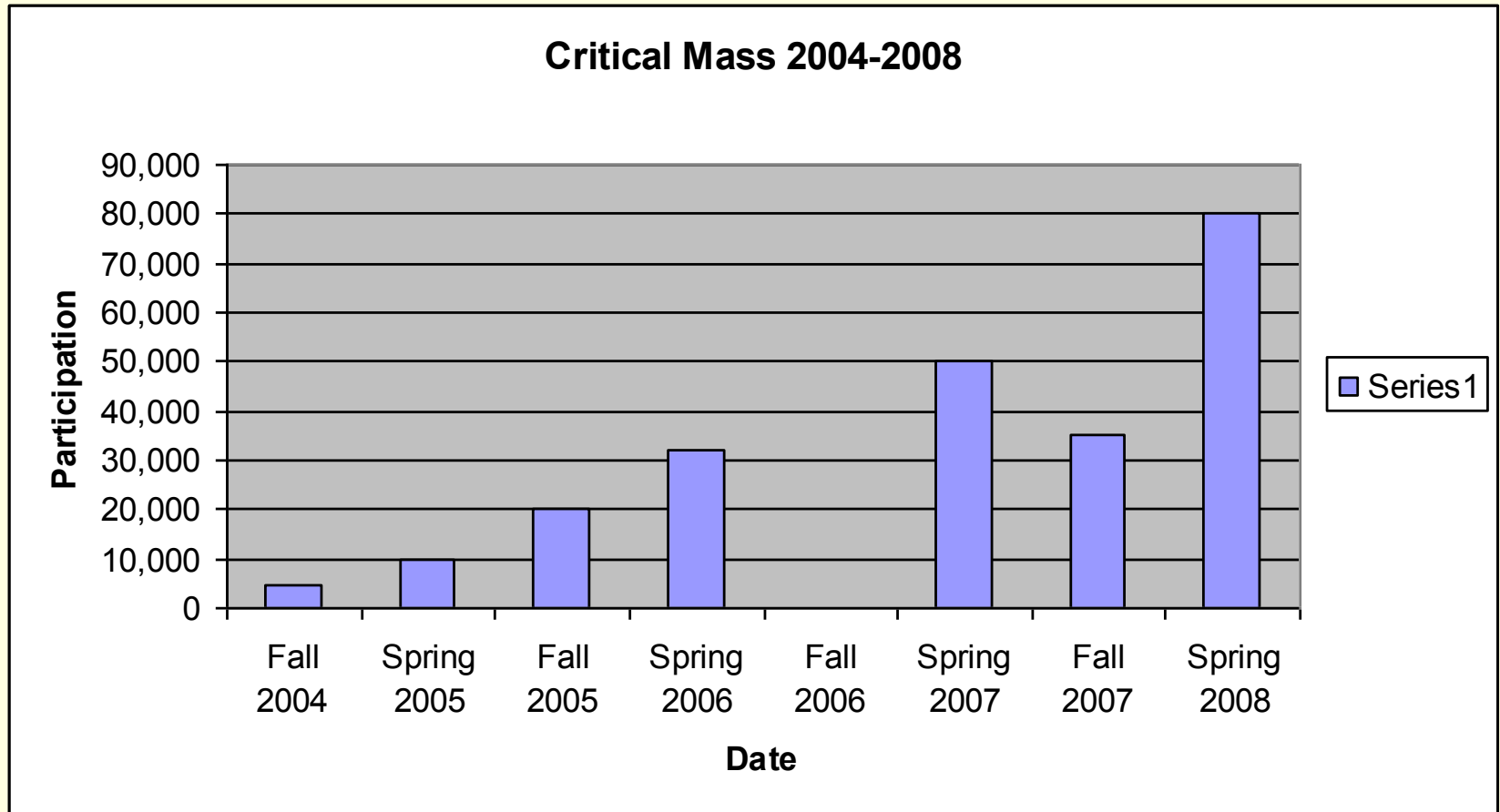


Former Mayor Gábor Demszky

- Proposed for European Car Free Day – mayor refuses permission on grounds it will disrupt traffic
- Some cyclists went ahead anyway – joined by then environment minister
- Following Sunday, the city-sanctioned ride went ahead, drawing a completely unexpected **4,500** riders



Participation doubled each time ...



Spring 2008: 60,000-80,000



Keys to Success

- Held just twice per year
- Spring ride on car-free route with police escort
SAFE FOR EVERYONE
- Celebratory rather than Confrontational = **FUN**
- Well organised
- Hungary has cycling culture – latent in Budapest



Keys to Success

- Non-partisan:
Everyone invited
- Non-commercial:
Runs on volunteer power, private donations and t-shirt sales
- Participants encouraged to follow road rules and be polite



2010 Car-Free Day Critical Mass



Achievements

“With this ‘critical mass’ behind us, there’s no one who would refuse to talk to our group.”

**János László,
President of the Hungarian Cyclists’ Club
2008**



Cyclist NGO gets framework contract with City Hall



Achievements



Alkotmány utca



First of many on-street bike lanes



Achievements



District VII



District VIII

First of many on-street bike racks



Achievements

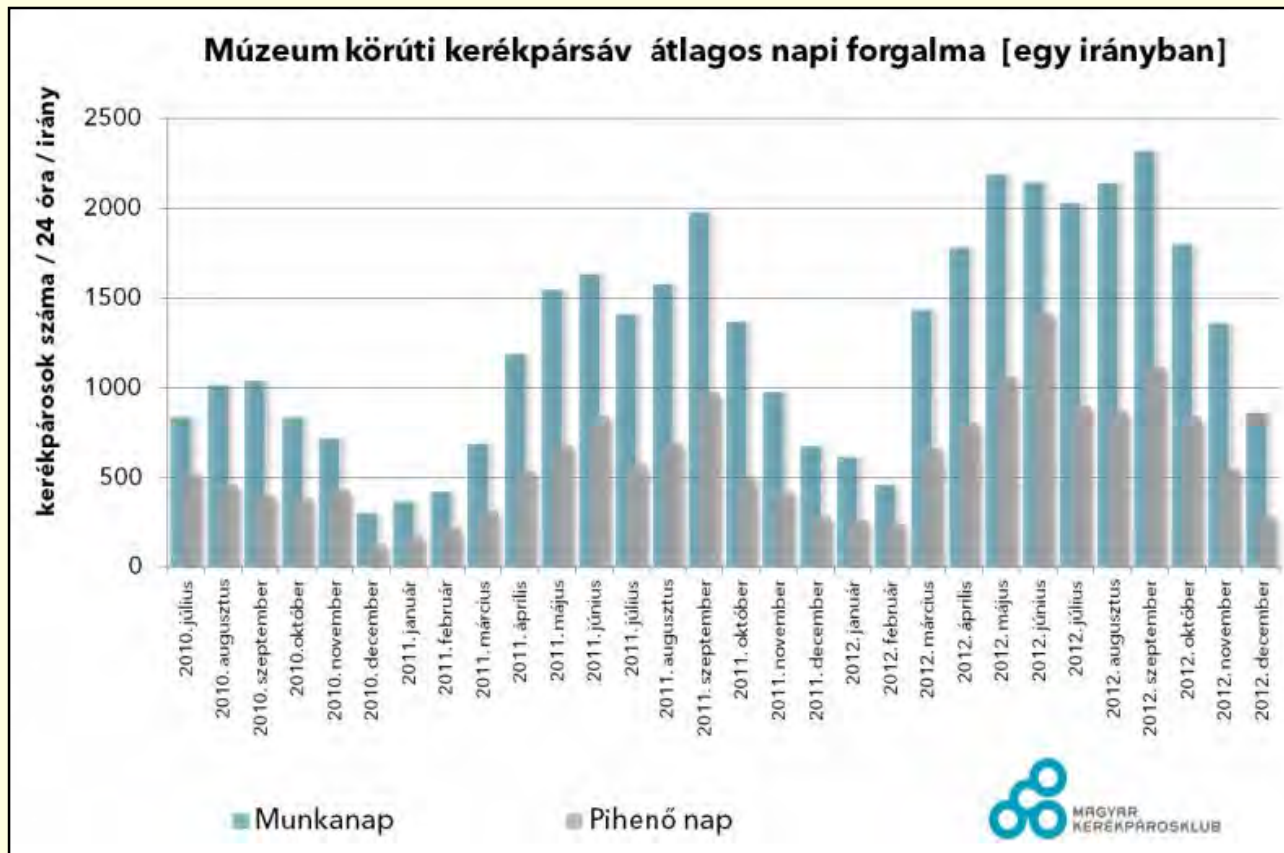


Small Ring Road (kiskörút)

Bicycle traffic jams!



Achievements



Bike traffic growth on Small Ring Road – 50% / year



Budapest CM comes to an end



Earth Day 2013: approx. 100,000



Why?



Károly Sinka and Gábor Kürti

- Organisers say: *Critical Mass is a demonstration, not a festival. And it's achieved everything that it can achieve.*



What way forward?

- Organisers tried to persuade participants to support bike club – but with limited success
- They're skeptical of a simple festival
- Some bike events set for Earth Day 2014 (Mobile 2020 final event included!) but details still up in the air



Thank you for your attention!

Greg Spencer

gspencer@rec.org

cyclingsolution.blogspot.com

