

August 17, 2011

Liz Danzico, Chair  
MFA in Interaction Design  
School of Visual Arts

## **Request for Thesis Project Collaboration**

By Carrie Stiens and Kristin Breivik

Dear Liz,

We would like to receive permission to complete the MFA Interaction Design thesis as a two-person collaboration. We are requesting to work together based on our excitement about a concept developed as part of a group project last semester related to biking in urban areas. The core of the concept is a talking bike companion that provides riders with voice navigation during their trip, while also tracking their biking habits. It uses the data gathered to inform bikers about their progress and encourage them to continue biking in the city. We understand that the current curriculum states thesis as an individual project. In the next few paragraphs we will provide details about how the initial concept will serve as a jumping off point, talk about our approach, and outline why our collaboration on this thesis is beneficial to the project itself, our experience at SVA and the MFA IxD program.

The product we were a part of imagining last semester was a helmet with embedded speakers that is paired up with a smart phone app. We are in no way certain that this would be the final form of our thesis product, but would like the concept to mainly serve as a jumping off point. Our intention is to explore the many different components of a what digital bike companion may be, to develop a viable product for bikers, and to market the final product. We are very excited and committed to letting our thesis year be an opportunity to make a product and share it with the world.

A concept with many different components and technical complexity combined with our mutual dedication to make this a *real* product rather than a blueprint or prototype, leads us to believe that we need to tackle this project together. We feel that only then can the final product truly reach its full potential. Based on the previous concept, we have defined several areas that we would need to go deep into to make such a project work:

## CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Getting to know our users:  
interviews with bikers, user testing

Creating a delightful user experience:  
design of app, website, physical product, charger, packaging, audio/voice, bike companion personality, dialogue between the companion and user, content strategy, choice of data

How to motivate people to bike:  
display of data tracking for individual and aggregated progress, setting goals, etc.

## TECH & DEVELOPMENT

Hardware:  
helmet, bluetooth device, speakers, remote, buttons, etc.

Software:  
app dev, website dev, interfacing with map API (Google or Open Street Maps), text-to-speech technology, GPS tracking, database dev

Tech training:  
learn to code HTML, CSS, JavaScript for mobile and web, research and dev for hardware

## HELLO WORLD!

Networking & partnerships:  
Ride the City, helmet companies, DOT, tech developers

Fundraising:  
Kickstarter, etc.

Marketing:  
branding (visual design, content), promoting on blogs, NYC Bike Month, etc.

Strategy:  
market research, budget, etc.

We have been doing some research and testing already to make sure that we can commit to an idea around a digital bike companion for the length of the thesis year. These explorations also made us confident about our ability to successfully work together. And, while we are confident that this project needs two people, we understand that the thesis process involves owning every piece of a project. We will plan to each claim ownership over specific parts of the project so that we have two individual thesis tracks that are working toward the same final product.

At the end of our 2-year program we would like to walk away with the experience of developing and marketing a viable product that we can share with the real world. So far, through the MFA IxD program, we have learned that Interaction Design can encompass much more than wireframes. We would like to use the knowledge we have gained through the program and challenge ourselves to be bold and take a risk on a project that is much bigger than us. The outcome, we expect will benefit our own experience at SVA as well as the MFA IxD program itself.

We hope to receive your approval on our request for collaboration. We both truly believe that our project idea deserves to be more than just an idea and are excited about developing it into a viable product for bikers during this upcoming thesis year.

Sincerely,

Carrie Stiens and Kristin Breivik  
MFA Candidates in Interaction design  
School of Visual Arts