



The Case for Bike Lanes

Posted by [Glenn](#) on February 9, 2006 - 7:33pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [bicycling](#), [local government](#), [manhattan](#), [new york](#) [[list all tags](#)]

On Monday, I'll be speaking at the local Community Board [CB8 Manhattan](#) about bringing safe bike lanes to the neighborhood, which would basically require the removal of a lane of car traffic on First and Second Avenues.

I'm also going to argue for the creation of a bike parking market whereby parking garages would have to accept bikes for parking at a cost ratio of 12:1 (which is the number of bikes you can fit in the place of a car).

I am very interested in how this little exercise in local government will go. My hopes are high, but I'm trying to be realistic and patient about what might actually happen. I have been distributing flyers around the neighborhood so I'm hoping for a good turn out!

Transportation Committee Meeting

Date: February 13, 2006

Time: 7-9 PM

Location: NY Blood Center, 310 East 67th Street, (First-Second), Conference Room #1

Voice your support for bike lanes and bike parking by writing or calling CB8 at: info@cb8m.com or 212-758-4340

Read my draft speech below.

Community Board 8 Speech on the NYC Bicycling Master Plan

I. Introduction

I have a simple desire. I would like to bike safely for my daily commute to work. I want to bike because it would be the fastest, least expensive, most reliable and healthiest way to get to work.

II. Personal Reasons for Wanting to Bike

Speed: I live on 85th Street near Second Avenue. I work at 42nd Street and Second Avenue. This 2-mile stretch should be an easy ten-minute ride on bike, compared to 25 minutes door to door on the 4/5 train or 35 minutes on the M15.

Health: If I biked to work, I would burn about 100 calories each way.

Cost: I already have a bike so it would only cost a little extra to maintain the bike in good condition instead of \$2 each way with the MTA or \$10 plus tip for a cab ride. Over the course of a year, I have calculated that I could save over \$1000 on transit related expenses from reduced need for trains, buses and taxis. Biking around town could also

eliminate my need for a gym membership that costs about \$75 a month - a yearly savings of \$900.

Reliability: If I biked to work, I could start my trip to and from work whenever I am ready, instead of waiting for the next train, bus or taxi. The transit strike was another recent reminder that New York's great mass transportation system is complex and can fail for many different reasons - terrorism, power outage, labor problems, etc. There are also daily subway outages and major changes every week for emergency repairs or water main breaks or planned capital improvements. And even on a good day, there is severe overcrowding on most Eastside options.

However right now biking in this neighborhood is simply **unsafe** during the morning commute. With five lanes of active traffic and no protected bike lane, I have no doubt that I would be risking life and limb attempting to ride those two miles of treacherous terrain.

III. Community Benefits

I'm not just here because of my own narrow self-interest. There are benefits to the community of enabling more people to bike. Mass transit and automobile traffic on the East Side is beyond capacity. The Lexington Avenue Line is completely overcrowded. The M15 Limited has to swerve around illegally parked cars and trucks and taxis drive recklessly and cost a fortune. Cars back up for blocks honking their horns (illegally) out of frustration. Here is how the community would benefit from more biking.

Transportation Flexibility: In the event of a major disruption, like 9/11, the blackout, transit strike or a water main break, there is no reason that Upper East Siders should not be able to move around town. Bike owners have the greatest independence from these system failures and a neighborhood that bikes will have less economic disruption.

Less Dependence on Fossil Fuels: Oil prices are steadily rising, and show no sign of going down. Scientists and economists have predicted that oil will not be a stable resource in the near future. By providing bike lanes, the city will put into place a system that will allow New Yorkers to both save money and conserve this diminishing resource

Less Pollution: Unlike all motorized forms of transportation, biking does not pollute the local or global environment from the toxic gases emitted by fossil fuels emitted used to run buses, automobiles or to generated the electricity needed to run the subways.

Less Car-Traffic Congestion and Noise: Second Avenue is backed up most days from about 70th Street to the Queensboro Bridge to 60th Street. The five lanes of car traffic hit a bottleneck at the Queensboro Bridge. It's a cruel hoax played on car drivers that the easy ride from Harlem down past 79th Street will continue all the way the length of Manhattan. A bike lane could tame this mini-highway through one of the densest urban environments and perhaps discourage drivers from using Second Avenue instead of the FDR

Use of Public Space: A bike takes up much less street space to park than an automobile. In fact you could fit at least 12 bikes in the same space as one medium sized sedan.

Less Crowded Mass Transit: If only a small percentage of physically fit Upper East Siders started biking to work instead of relying on mass transit, that would free up room for those who truly need mass transit like the elderly, disabled or those traveling long distances.

Healthy Population: We have an obesity problem in this country in all age groups. This is causing epidemic rates of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. I watch in amazement at school children taking a bus 10 blocks to school, at young people in their 20s and 30s in this neighborhood who have a 2-3 mile commute to midtown and yet they feel they need to join a gym to ride on a stationary bike or run on a treadmill to get exercise.

IV. Enabling Biking on the Upper East Side

So what can we do to enable and encourage more biking in the community?

Two words: **Safety & Convenience**

1. Buffered Bike Lanes/East West Connections: We need at least one North/South buffered bike lane. The NYC bike master plan recommends First and Second Avenues for this purpose. I would further add that we need East/West bike lanes to connect the East Side greenway to Central Park. Also people getting off the Queensboro bridge are forced to go east even though most of their final destinations are west.

2. Bike Parking: City Councilmember David Yassky has introduced legislation that would require commercial building owners to allow tenants to bring their bikes inside. This would go a long way towards encouraging cycling, as the number one impediment to bicycle commuting cited by potential bike commuters is the lack of safe and secure bike storage. Installing more bike racks in key locations, like near subway stations, park entrances, schools, near shopping and other destinations would also help.

I would also suggest that every effort be made to create a bike parking market in the Upper East Side. Almost all parking garages refuse to store bikes. I live in a walk-up and it is a major inconvenience to haul my bike up and down two flights of stairs every time I want to use it. Here's the math: 12 bikes times \$35/mo = \$420/month. That's roughly the same as a car space generates for a parking garage.

3. Bike Lane Encroachment Enforcement: On First Avenue north of 72nd Street - CB 8's only on-street bike lane - there are too many double-parked trucks, cars, cab drop-offs, etc. If more bike lanes are installed, I hope that enforcement will be vigorous.

V. Conclusion

We have a serious transportation situation on the Upper East Side. Our roads and mass transit systems are beyond capacity and prone to disruption by many sources. Automobiles can simply not fill that void, even during a minor disruption.

We are blessed with a dense and relatively flat city perfect for all types of person-powered transportation and we should make these safe and accessible to as many people as possible.

Our community would benefit in many way by enabling more people to use their bikes. All of this shows the need to encourage more people to bike to work, in-line skate to work, walk to work, carpool to work, etc. In particular, I call on Community Board 8 to follow the lead of other areas of Manhattan in implementing the Bicycle Master Plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important subject.

Please send your comments and suggestions.



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