

# Cycling in New York City



Map of existing bikeways in NYC.

## Existing Bicycle Use

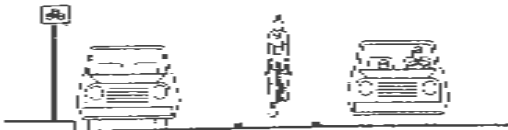
There are approximately 119 miles of bicycle facilities in New York City. The facilities, which are distributed among all five boroughs, range from multi-use park paths, to on-street lanes on such major arteries as Broadway and

First Avenue in Manhattan, and signed routes on Bay Street in Staten Island. Although designated as "bicycle" facilities, on-street lanes are shared with in-line skaters, and off-street paths are shared with skaters, joggers and pedestrians.



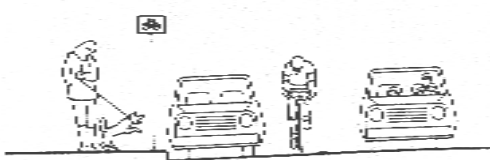
*Multi-use Path: Separated from the roadway and delineated by pavement markings and regulatory signage. Bicycle paths are usually shared with multiple users, including pedestrians, runners and skaters.*

*Example: Shore Parkway, Brooklyn*



*On-Street Bicycle Lane: Part of the roadway and delineated by pavement markings and regulatory signage. The lane, which can be shared with in-line skaters, is usually located next to curb lane parking, and may include a marked buffer zone.*

*Example: Lafayette Street, Manhattan*

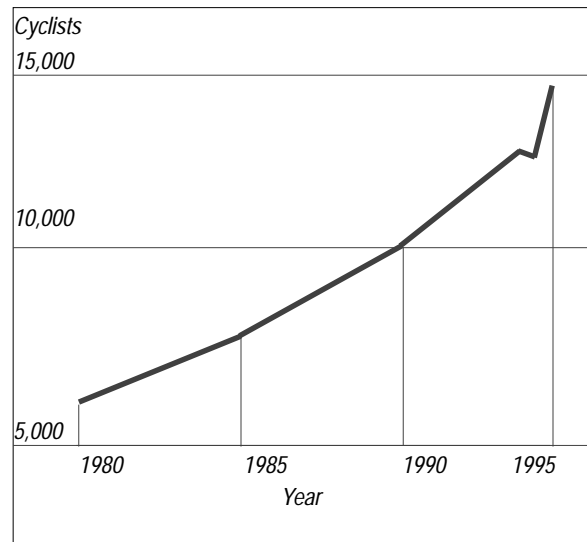


*Signed Bicycle Route: Shared use of the roadway, typically designated with informational signs.*

*Example: Henry Street, Brooklyn*

*Existing Bikeway Classifications*

Bicycle use in New York City has increased substantially. Since 1980, DOT has monitored bicycle travel across a screenline at 50th Street in midtown Manhattan, on the Staten Island Ferry to lower Manhattan, and across the Queensboro, Williamsburg and Brooklyn Bridges. Statistics show that daily bicycle use in 1995 had increased by 124% over the 1980 levels. (See table below). Transportation Alternatives estimates that on a given day, as many as 80,000 New Yorkers use the bicycle for commutation, commercial delivery or recreation.



*Bicycle use in New York City 1980 - 1995  
Manhattan 50th Street Screenline*

*Source: NYC DOT*

In addition to cycling, New York City has seen a dramatic rise in another non-polluting mode of transportation - in-line skating. According to the International In-line Skating Association (ILSA), the number of skaters nationally has risen from 20,000 in 1984 to 6.3 million in 1991; American Sports Data recently documented over 10 million skaters in the U.S. 1995 counts along the East River Park esplanade and the Hudson River interim path indicate that in-line skaters outnumber cyclists along off-street paths by a ratio of 2 to 1.



*In-line Skater*

Planning for in-line skating is impeded by the absence of a national design standard. However, recent legislation has identified in-line skaters' rightful place on roadways. According to New York State law, in-line skaters on roadways are subject to the same rules and regulations as drivers of vehicles and "shall be driven on a usable bicycle or in-line skates lane, or near the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway or upon a usable right-hand shoulder so as to prevent undue interference with the flow of traffic" (See Appendix G). New York City law permits skating on sidewalks, and prohibits reckless behavior.

The BND Project acknowledges skating's popularity and recognizes that future on- and off-street bicycle facilities must accommodate, where possible, shared use by cyclists and skaters.

## Potential Bicycle Use

Despite the increase in cycling in New York City, the comparative number of cyclists remains low. According to the 1990 Census, bicycle trips comprised only 0.9% of all trips made by vehicles in the city. This low number is due in large part to the difficult cycling conditions and absence of sufficient facilities. New York City's dense land use and flat topography renders the city ideal for cycling. New Yorker's predilection for trips under five miles (62.7%, 1990 Census) bodes well for converting trips from auto to bicycle. In fact, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has targeted 10% of all short (five miles or less), individual vehicle trips to be made by bicycle by the year 2000.

A 1990 survey conducted by DOT indicates significant potential bicycle ridership. According to the survey, nearly 50% of the 688 Manhattan office workers living within 10 miles of their job and responding to the survey would cycle to work if provided with the following amenities:

- On-street bicycle lanes
- Building access for secure bicycle parking
- Facilities to shower and change clothes

Following significant investment in bicycle facilities, cities in industrialized countries have experienced dramatic increases in the level of cycling. For example, Copenhagen experienced a cycling increase of 50% in five years; Eugene, Oregon experienced an increase of 75%; and Toronto experienced an increase of 270%. In addition, cycling constitutes 25%, 18% and 11% of nationwide trips in Denmark, Netherlands and the former West Germany, respectively; 30% of all work and school commutes in Japan; and 50% of all trips in China.

<b>DOT Survey: Interest in Bicycle Commuting in New York City</b>	
Distance (1-way)	Percent who would commute
0-5 miles	45%
5-10 miles	54%
0-10 miles (subtotal)	49%
>10 miles	19%

The City of Chicago, similar to New York in terms of size, age and physical, social and climactic characteristics, has developed bicycle programs in an attempt to increase cycling. Chicago hopes to transfer 10% of auto trips to cycling by the year 2000 by constructing a 300 mile bicycle network, adopting a bicycle parking ordinance and expanding municipal bicycle-parking facilities, increasing commercial, governmental, and police use of bicycles, and increasing educational programs for cyclists and drivers.

In addition to investing in bicycle facilities, all cities with high levels of cycling have adopted comprehensive bicycle programs, with key elements including education, consistent facility maintenance, traffic enforcement and, perhaps most importantly, the institutionalization of cycling. According to the FHWA's study, *The National Bicycling and Walking Study - Transportation Choices for a Changing America*, successful state and local bicycling programs are characterized by the integration, or institutionalization of cyclists' needs through policies, programs and procedures of various governmental agencies. New York City's comprehensive bicycle program, which includes the institutionalization of cycling, is proposed in the final section of this *Plan*.