

Center City Reports: Bicycles

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Center City is in the midst of a profound demographic transformation, as young, well-educated residents expand the boundaries of downtown. More than one-third of those dwelling in zip codes 19123, 19130, 19146 and 19147 are between ages 25 and 34 and, by adding the 35 to 44 year-old cohort, this group accounts for between one-half and two-thirds of residents in these neighborhoods.

While a 2009 Center City District survey found that 35% of downtown residents walk to work, the same survey noted that nearly 10% of those who commute to work from peripheral neighborhoods do so by bicycle.

Partly this is a matter of economics for students, artists, artisans and those early in their careers. But it is also a lifestyle choice. Young professionals a half cen-

tury ago dreamed of Corvettes, GTOs and Mustangs; today *sustainability* is a paramount cultural value.

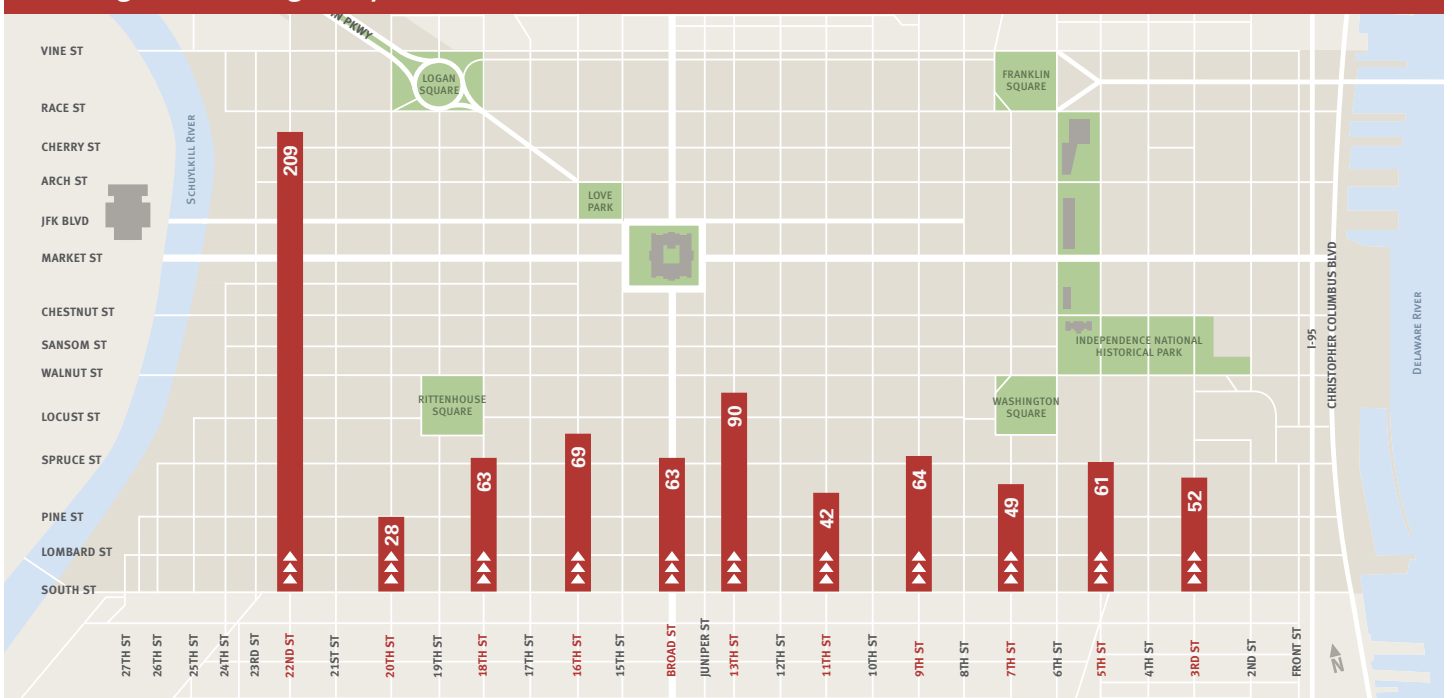
Last year, the City of Philadelphia created a demonstration east-bound bike lane on Pine Street and a west-bound lane on Spruce Street. But there is only one north-bound bike lane on 22nd Street and no dedicated south-bound bike lane from Center City, though the City Planning Commission recently recommended a more comprehensive network.

To quantify the number of bikers entering downtown from the south, the CCD counted the number of cyclists between 8:00 am and 9:00 am crossing Spruce Street into Center City on every north bound street from 3rd to 22nd Street. Counts occurred from July 13th to 22nd on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and



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Average Morning Bicycle Commuters (Northbound Streets, 8am–9am)



Bicycles

Thursdays. They took place regardless of weather conditions — which were both extraordinarily hot and punctuated by major downpours — in order to achieve a representative average.¹

The presence of a dedicated bike lane clearly matters: 22nd Street had three-and-a-half times the volume of the average on other streets while nearby 20th Street had the lowest use. The second lowest volume was recorded on 11th Street, where trolley tracks create a frightening trap for bicycle tires.

Anyone who has ridden a bicycle in a dense urban area understands the relative security that a bike lane provides from wayward vehicles, large trucks and

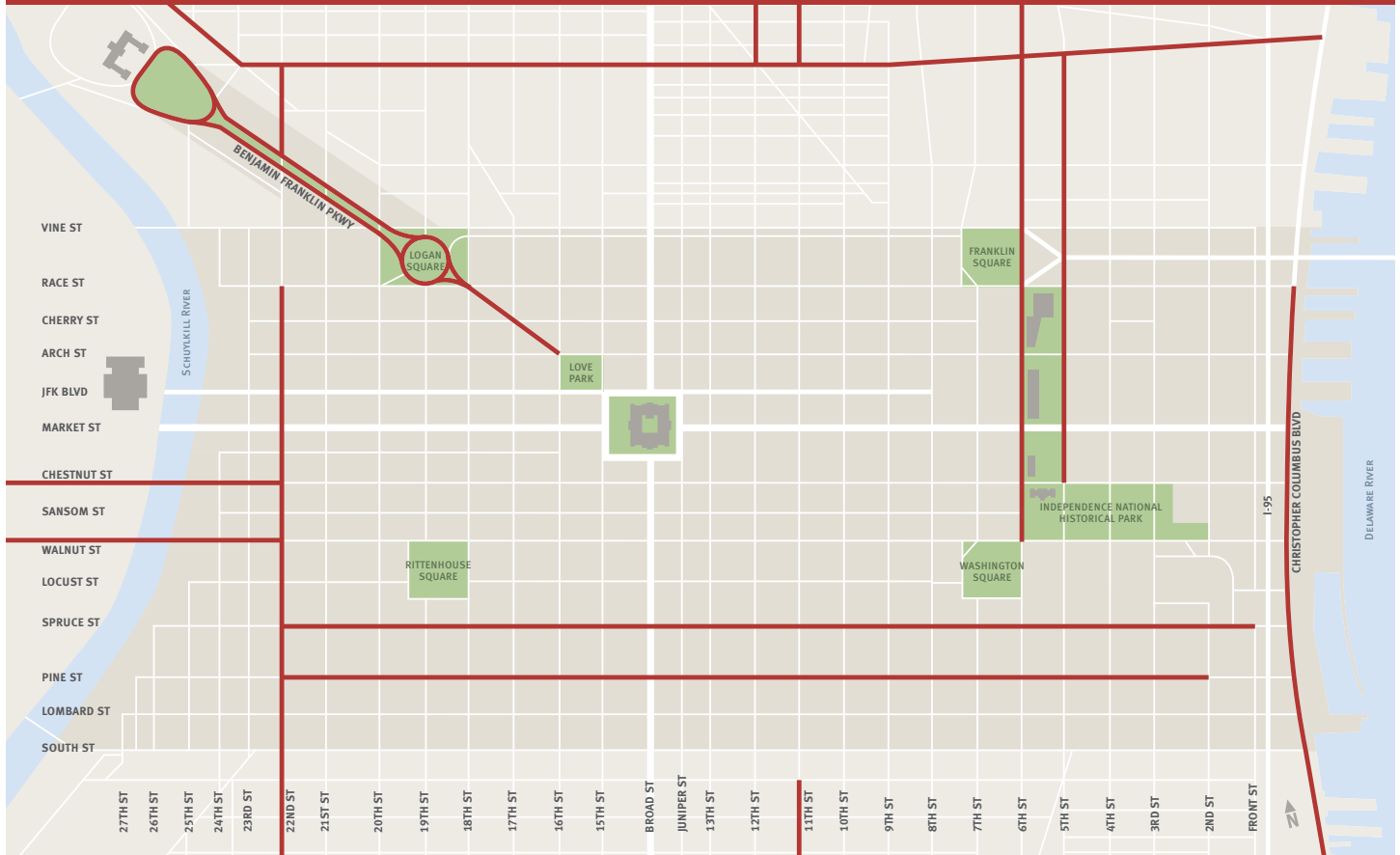
buses, and the sudden opening of car doors. With an average rush hour ridership from the south into Center City of almost 800 cyclists, improving Center City's deficient bicycle infrastructure can achieve multiple aims. By concentrating bicyclists on a few north and south streets, Philadelphia not only facilitates low-carbon commuting, it can free up other streets for motorists for whom bicyclists can pose an equally annoying hazard.

This leads to a larger point. Philadelphia can not simply stripe a few lanes that are filled with potholes and call itself *green*, leaving motorists and cyclists to battle it out.

When Philadelphia experienced the profound change that the automobile brought, we didn't simply install traffic lights in 1933 and hope for the best. What is needed is an entire system of management: bike lanes, rules of the road, traffic signals for both cyclists and motorists, and real enforcement equally for all.

Philadelphia is at an important moment of change. To do this well requires a commitment of time to set priorities, balance multiple needs and allocate scarce space and the dedication of resources equal to the task.

Existing Bicycle Lanes



¹ A 2009 survey of office workers employed on West Market Street and JFK Boulevard found there was no appreciable difference between the number of days bikers biked to work in the spring, summer or fall for those that used that mode at least 4 times a week.