

# Bicycles

During the past two years, bicycle morning rush hour commuting northbound into Center City increased 33.4%, based on a new survey conducted by the Center City District. An average of 1,165 bikers entered downtown in the hour between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on the northbound streets between Third and 22<sup>nd</sup> Streets during the second and third weeks of September 2014. In 2012, the 8 to 9 a.m. average was 873 bicycle commuters.

Several factors help explain this increase. Gas prices have remained consistently above \$3 per gallon since January 2011, making cycling an affordable option not only for those early in their careers, but also for a diversity of ethnic and age groups who travel daily from South Philadelphia neighborhoods to work downtown. Second, there has been a continuing growth in population in the neighborhoods that surround the core of downtown and are situated, to large degree, beyond the immediate walkable range for those working or going to school in the downtown. In Zip codes 19123, 19130, 19146, and 19147, where population growth is being driven primarily by a younger demographic, 24% to 29% of those dwelling in these Zip codes are between ages 25 and 34. When 25 to 44 year olds are counted, the number varies between 38% and 43%. The 2012 American Community Survey found that 40% of downtown residents walk to work, while over 7% of those who commute to work from Center



City's peripheral neighborhoods do so by bicycle, including 12.8% of commuters from Passyunk Square and 10.4% from Pennsport. Third, more office buildings and employers are providing options for on-site storage of bikes for employees. Finally, the Nutter Administration has placed a continuous emphasis on bicycles as a mode of transport, and even controversies over the location of bike lanes serve to keep a focus on biking as an alternative mode.

While no new dedicated bike lanes for northbound traffic into Center City were installed during the past two years, the two streets with dedicated bike lanes experienced the highest volumes of cyclists: 22<sup>nd</sup> Street with 213 riders per hour

and 13<sup>th</sup> Street with 238 riders per hour. The northbound bike lane on 13<sup>th</sup> Street saw a 164% increase in riders, compared to 2010 when no lane existed, and a 59% increase over the past two years. Twenty-Second Street, which has had a bike lane for several years, experienced reduced volume in 2012 from 2010 levels, but rebounded in 2014 to exceed its previous levels. The lowest usage occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, most likely due to the nearby 22<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets alternatives. Eleventh Street poses a safety challenge for cyclists with Route 23 trolley tracks running northbound, but this should be alleviated by a safe biking initiative this fall from SEPTA and the Streets Department to remove or pave over the tracks within Center City.

# Bicycles

Surveyors recorded that 65% of the riders were male and 35% were female, compared to a 68%/32% split in 2012. In European cities with extensive, dedicated bike lanes, the male-female split is closer to 50/50.

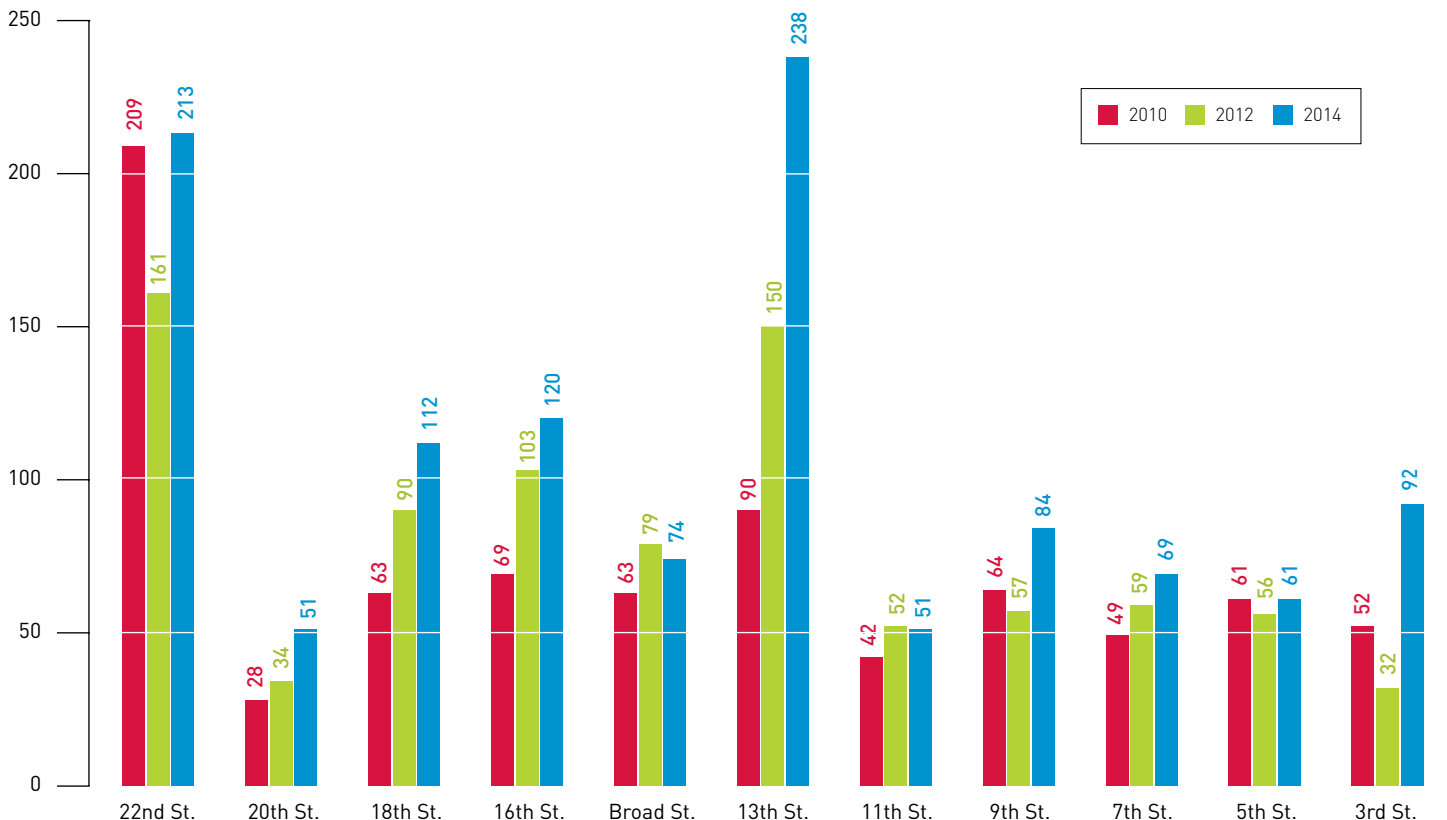
As the City of Philadelphia continues to install bike amenities, such as the bike share program that will roll out in Spring 2015, the number who choose bicycling to commute to work or school, or to carry out other necessary activities, will continue to increase, especially given the level topography of nearly all neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. Opportunities exist to install additional bike lanes, specifically east of 13<sup>th</sup> Street, where there is currently very limited bike infrastructure. The 2012 Bicycle



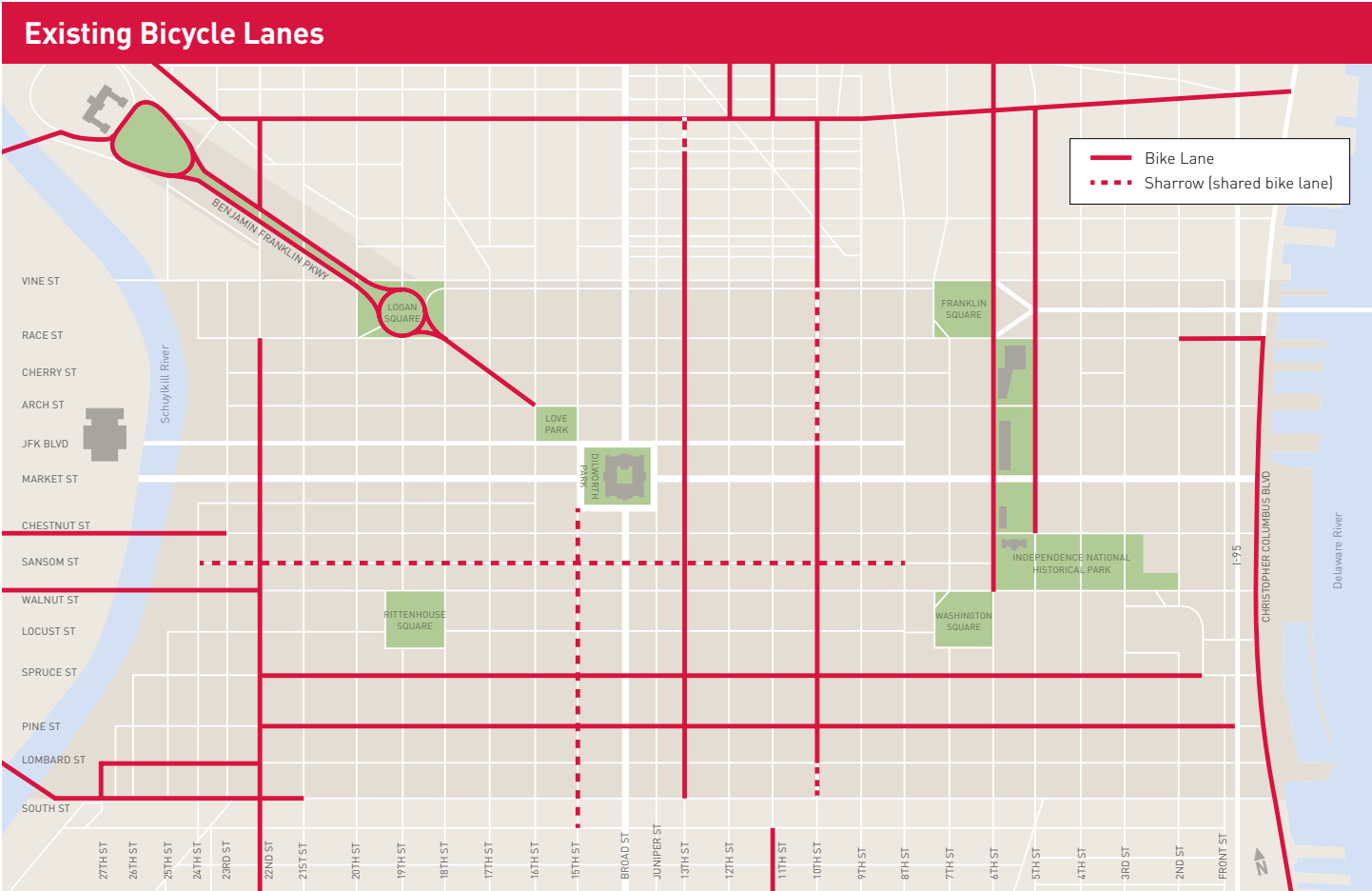
and Pedestrian Plan released by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission recommends installation of up to 117 new miles of bike lanes city-wide. Philadelphia's narrow

streets make additional bike lanes a continuing challenge, but having a balanced offering of transportation options is essential to the competitiveness of 21<sup>st</sup> century cities.

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



Source: Bicycle Commuting Survey, Center City District



## METHODOLOGY

To tabulate the number of cyclists entering downtown from the south, the CCD deployed surveyors on every northbound street from Third Street to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street at Spruce Street between

8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Counts occurred each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from September 9<sup>th</sup> to September 18<sup>th</sup>. Weather conditions varied from overcast and humid to pleasant with temperatures in the

60s. Road conditions ranged from slick from overnight rains to ideal. The bicycle counts from each day were then averaged to create the charts and statistics included in this report.