

Joshua Benson



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What kinds of gear do you use (not gears on bike, but lights, helmet, rain coat, etc.)? I always wear a helmet and use lights at night, but the bell is my favorite accessory. It really gets people's attention. My new bike has fenders, so I wear a rain jacket and ride in light rain.

How long have you been commuting?
About 9 years.

Why did you start commuting by bike? When I was going to college at NYU, I lived so far from the subway that biking was the only way I could get to class. Once I got in the habit of commuting by bike, I never wanted to go back to the subway.

What do you wear when you bike to work? I wear my work clothes, but I don't put my tie on until I get to the office.

Do you ride in all weather? I ride in a lot of weather, but I don't ride in heavy rain or extreme cold.

What kind of response do you get from your co-workers? They are only surprised when I don't ride!

What has been your best experience on your bike in New York City? The first Bike to Shea Day in 2004 was blast. More than 70 people rode from Manhattan to a Mets game together. Joan Scholvin in my office had the idea for the event and worked with the Mets so that we could have a section of the parking lot reserved for secure valet bicycle

parking. Biking and baseball are a great combination.

What was your worst experience on your bike in New York City? I was hit by another cyclist on a recumbent bike on the Manhattan Bridge. He was trying to pass me where there wasn't enough room. He clipped my left side and I went over my handlebars. My front wheel was folded completely in half and I tore the meniscus in me left knee. After the crash, he rode away and left me there on the bridge. Another cyclist who saw the crash stayed with me until I could walk, then walked with me all the way back to my apartment. I got to see both the apathy and the compassion of New Yorkers first hand.

If you could change one thing to make bike riding safer and more pleasant in New York City what would it be? Well, it's my job to change a lot of things to make biking safer in New York City. Outside of developing and improving the bicycle network, I think that respect and courtesy could go a long way to making New York more bike-friendly. I'd love to see more motorists and cyclists be more respectful of one another and of pedestrians.

Give us some advice for new bicycle commuters: Try it! It's a great way to start and end your day. If you don't feel comfortable riding on the street, start in a park or greenway and slowly work your way up to riding in traffic. Oh, and get a bell. You'll be surprised how useful it is.

Where do you park your bike? At work, we have a great bicycle parking area in the basement. Over the years more and more people have been commuting by bike. On nice days you have to get to work early in order to get a spot.

What's the most memorable reaction you've gotten while riding your bike? No particular reaction comes to mind, but I always enjoy bumping into friends and colleagues while riding. That never happens on my subway commute. □

Age: 30

Occupation: Urban Planner

Are you a T.A. member? No.

Where do you commute to/from? Clinton Hill, Brooklyn to Tribeca, Manhattan

What is your route? I usually take the Manhattan Bridge via Sands Street, then East Broadway to Worth Street. Sometimes I'll take the Brooklyn Bridge in the morning because it's a shorter ride, but I avoid it in the evenings because it's such a popular tourist strolling spot.

What kind of bike do you have? My girlfriend just got me a Redline 9-2-5 this summer as a birthday/graduation present. It's a single speed city bike. I love it. I also have a 1980s Peugeot road bike that used to be my dad's. I ride the Peugeot when I need to lock up outside.

Josh Benson is the new Director of the NYC DOT Bicycle Program.