Fifth and Sixth Avenue Bicycle and Traffic Study
Introduction

This report contains a summary of counts of bicycles and motor vehicles using Fifth and Sixth Avenues in Manhattan from Canal Street to 59th Street, taken during the spring and summer of this year. They show that bicycles make up over 10% of the vehicles in motion on the two avenues, and that the launch of CitiBike in 2013 has dramatically increased bike use in the Manhattan central business district. Since 2012, Transportation Alternatives has called on city government to install protected bicycle lanes on Fifth and Sixth Avenues in Manhattan.

The counts summarized in this report show that New Yorkers want or need to ride bicycles to reach destinations on or served by Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The high level of bike use found by these counts is taking place in spite of very heavy motor traffic, poor cycling conditions, and large increases in cycling seen on nearby protected bike lanes on Eighth and Ninth Avenues and Broadway.

Both Fifth and Sixth Avenue feature long stretches with no bicycle lanes. Where bike lanes exist, they do not meet the standard protected-lane design the city implemented on other Manhattan Avenues beginning in 2007. Furthermore, the planned expansion of CitiBike to the Upper West and East Sides will likely increase cycling on Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Both avenues provide direct access routes to or from these neighborhoods to the busiest sections of the Manhattan central business district.

The high proportion of CitiBike use that Transportation Alternatives’ counters found also suggests that City government’s bridge-oriented official bicycle counts may not be telling the whole story of cycling growth in New York. NYC DOT’s counts found 9% growth in cycling from 2012 to 2013 and 4% growth from 2013 to 2014. CitiBike was launched in May 2013 and is currently undergoing expansion, so these numbers are expected to continue to grow.
Overall bicycle mode share did not show a large variation between peak and off-peak times (peak defined as 7-10 am and 4-7 pm), or when compared between the two avenues. This may be because of commercial bike trips made throughout the work-day.
148 Bikes / Hour
(4758 bikes were counted over 32 hours of observation.)

25.8%
CitiBike share of the total bikes observed on both Avenues.

CitiBike Share Breakdown

- FIFTH AVE: 27.4%
- SIXTH AVE: 25.2%
- PEAK: 31.3%
- OFF-PEAK: 14.1%

CitiBike trips are a peak commuting-time phenomenon, with over twice the amount of mode share when measured during peak periods (peak defined as 7-10 am and 4-7 pm).
Between 14th and 42nd Streets, Sixth Avenue has the greatest CitiBike share of bicycle trips: 30.1%

Between Wash. Square Park and 23rd Street, Fifth Avenue has the highest bike share of total traffic: 16.2%
The share of women cyclists is an indicator of perceived infrastructure safety, and a network of protected infrastructure promotes **cycling as equitable transportation for all**, including vulnerable road users.
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Notes

All statistics based on 32 hours of manual traffic counts performed by Transportation Alternatives volunteers between April and August 2015.

All maps altered from the official NYC DOT Bike Map 2015.
CitiBike icon from The Noun Project - Shahed Syed.
Wheel icon from The Noun Project - Arthur Shlain.