

City bike numbers unwheel

Clash with Census

By DAVID SEIFMAN City Hall Bureau Chief

If you build it, maybe they *won't* come.

The city is aggressively expanding the number of controversial bike lanes in every borough, and claiming the number of cyclists is skyrocketing -- but a new report says there are actually fewer commuters pedaling to work.

A paltry 0.6 percent of New Yorkers -- a total of 22,686 -- used bikes to go to and from their jobs in 2009, according to the US Census-based study, released yesterday by NYU's Furman Center.

That's 14 percent fewer than in 2007, when more than 26,000 people pedaled the streets in suits and ties.



CHAD RACHMAN/NEW YORK POST

But studies conducted by the city's **Transportation Department** say the number of people who rode bikes increased 66 percent from 2007 to 2009.

City officials defended their numbers, pointing out that they're counting people who use bikes for any reason, including recreation.

The city's number provides a more reliable picture because its data reflect actual counts taken 10 times a year, said Seth Solomonow, a DOT spokesman.

"We count cyclists, not questionnaires," he said, in a clear criticism of the Census methodology.

The city's survey is taken at four bridges, the Staten Island Ferry and the Hudson River Park bikeway.

Ralph Buehler, a professor at **Virginia Tech** who studies bicycle trends, pointed out problems with both the city and the federal data.

"The US Census measures the main mode of transportation to work. So if you bike two times a week and take a train three times a week, they are going to record the train," he said.

Buehler also took a shot at the city's measurements, saying the DOT is focused on areas where there's a concentration of bicyclists, such as Manhattan and the Brooklyn neighborhoods closest to Manhattan.

The NYU study also revealed that 57 percent of New Yorkers took mass transit to work, while 29.9 drove and 10.7 walked.

About 2.2 percent of the work crowd in Boston and 2.3 percent in Washington, DC, pedaled to their jobs, the NYU study showed.

Bikers questioned at random on the Queens side of the 59th Street Bridge lined up with the city.

"In the last two years, many more people are biking to work," said Mike Hogan, a carpenter biking from Manhattan to Woodside. "When the gas and the fares went up, it was a double-whacking."

The annual NYU report deals primarily with housing issues, but contains a wealth of demographic information, such as:

* Coney Island had the most people over 65; Borough Park had more residents under 18.

* The Upper East Side boasted the most residents with college degrees.

Additional reporting by Len Maniace

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