Cyclists don’t even use bike lanes.

Bennett 12, John Bennett, writer for Connect Savannah, 04-10-12, “New bike lane, new complaints,” http://www.connectsavannah.com/news/article/106165/

Immediately following the redesign of Price Street to include a bike lane and on–street parking, some folks offered grim forecasts. Automobile traffic would snarl, they predicted. Bicyclists would be hurt daily, they warned. Parked cars would be damaged, they fretted. Now people are starting to complain, not about what might happen, but about what hasn’t happened yet. “Cyclists aren’t using the new bike lane.” Your mileage may vary, but I’ve travelled on Price Street numerous times by bike and by car and have seen cyclists on every trip. And, I know from personal experience, plenty of people don’t see bicyclists even when they are there. Studies confirm that bicycle facilities, like the new Price Street lane, encourage more people to ride bikes. But it doesn’t happen overnight. Some cyclists may still be unaware they have this option. Others, having learned to avoid the high speed traffic on Price Street, may be apprehensive. It’s worth noting that because our bike route network is far from complete, the Price Street bike lane does not intersect with any other pavement marked bike lanes. Connectivity is crucial to maximizing use of bicycle facilities, and despite very important progress in recent years Savannah has a long way to go. “Cyclists are still using other streets.” While the new lane will attract cyclists who previously took other routes, not everyone will use it. Some people complain they still see cyclists mixing with high volume and high speed car traffic on other streets. Here’s a fact that often eludes people who don’t ride bicycles for transportation: Motorists and cyclists are similar in that they often choose the fastest and most direct route. While many cyclists will go out of their way to use Price Street like I do, others don’t have that luxury. Sometimes cyclists are required to use bike–unfriendly streets. And really, asking why cyclists use dangerous streets distracts us from more important questions. Shouldn’t we be asking how to make these streets less dangerous for all users? “Cyclists are still misbehaving.” Predictably, the topic of scofflaw cycling has crept into discussions of the new Price Street lane. Will cyclists ride the wrong way in the Price Street lane? Without a doubt, just as distracted, aggressive and impaired drivers will use any new roads built in Chatham County. The interesting thing about Price Street, however, is how blame is assigned. Motorists who ignore the presence of pavement markings, bike lane signs and, ahem, bicyclists and attempt to drive in a bike lane that is clearly too narrow to accommodate their cars are cast as victims of poor street design.

People in cars interact with the environment – sometimes better than cyclists

(Cassidy 11 John Cassidy, 3/8/11, staff writer at *The New Yorker*, previously an editor at *The Sunday Times* at London and deputy editor at the *New York Post*, *The New Yorker*, “Battle of the Bike Lanes,” http://www.newyorker.com/online/)

All of these vehicles I have used for work purposes and for domestic and leisure trips. Most of the time, I have parked them on the street, an urban custom the utility of which only becomes manifest when it is absent. Thanks to these four-wheel friends, I have discovered virtually every neighborhood of the city and its environs, and I would put my knowledge of New York’s geography and topography up against most native residents—cycling members of the Park Slope food co-op included. Today, with two young children who need ferrying hither and thither, I still drive all over town—and take great enjoyment out of it.

Bicycle lanes are not cost-effective

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Part of my beef, then, is undoubtedly an emotional reaction to the bike lobby’s effort to poach on our territory. But from an economic perspective I also question whether the blanketing of the city with bike lanes—more than two hundred miles in the past three years—meets an objective cost-benefit criterion. Beyond a certain point, given the limited number of bicyclists in the city, the benefits of extra bike lanes must run into diminishing returns, and the costs to motorists (and pedestrians) of implementing the policies must increase. Have we reached that point? I would say so.

Bicycle lanes trade off with parking spaces

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A minor but not completely insignificant example. Like many New Yorkers who don’t live in Manhattan, one of my favorite pastimes is to drive from Brooklyn, where I live, into the city for dinner and find a parking space once the 7 A.M.-7 P.M. parking restrictions have lapsed. Years ago, this was a challenge, but a manageable one. These days, especially downtown, it is virtually impossible. When the city introduces a bike lane on a given street, it removes dozens of parking places. All too often these days, I find myself driving endlessly up and down Hudson, or Sixth Avenue, or wherever, looking in vain for a legal spot—and for cyclists. What I see instead is motor traffic snarled on avenues that, thanks to bike lanes, have been reduced from four lanes to three, or three to two. As of old, I sometimes almost run into a delivery boy riding the wrong way down the street, but even the delivery boys don’t seem to use the bike lanes for this purpose. (Perhaps they, too, are frightened of incurring the righteous rage of the helmeted.)

Many bicycle lanes are unnecessary

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Mayor Bloomberg, who plays Robespierre to Sadik-Khan’s Saint-Just, is forever claiming that, thanks to his enormously popular policies, bicycle usage has doubled, tripled, or quadrupled. Maybe that’s true in some places—there are a lot of bikers in Prospect Park these days, I grant you—but in Midtown? The Village? The East Side? I don’t see them. Even in Brooklyn, home to some of the most ardent bike activists, bike lanes have been overdone. Take Third Avenue\* in Gowanus, a thoroughfare that abuts the sacred Slope but which is itself still largely a commercial route. When I drive up and down Third Avenue, as I do often, what I usually see are cars and trucks inching along in single file (it’s a two-way street) with an empty bike lane next to them. (On those rare occasions when I do happen across a cyclist, or two, he or she invariably runs the red lights.)

A referendum or a bigger debate is needed before the implementation of bicycle lanes

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So, by all means, let us have some bike lanes on heavily used and clearly defined routes to and from the city—and on popular biking routes within the city and the boroughs. **But until and unless there is a referendum on the subject—or a much more expansive public debate, at least**—it is time to call a halt to Sadik-Khan and her faceless road swipers.