

Executive Summary



Reflecting improvements in the economy, subway ridership and traffic volumes in New York City grew in both 2010 and 2011. In 2011, citywide employment and traffic levels reached – and subway ridership surpassed – their pre-financial crisis peaks. Commuter bike riding, which has been growing rapidly since the early 2000s, continued to increase. The exception to these upward trends was bus ridership, which, with the exception of new Select Bus Service routes, has declined annually since 2008.

The key citywide trends, based on comprehensive data available for 2010 and the more limited data available for 2011, are:

- Citywide weekday subway ridership rose by 1.4% in 2010, and an additional 2.5% in 2011, surpassing the previous peak in 2008.
- Weekday bus ridership fell by 2.5% citywide in 2010 and by another 4.3% in 2011. Weekday bus ridership is down 9.4% since the pre-financial crisis peak in 2008.
- Traffic volumes increased 0.9% citywide in 2010, reaching the pre-financial crisis level. Based on preliminary data, traffic levels appeared to flatten out in 2011.
- Commuter bike riding increased 13% in 2010, and an additional 7% in 2011. Since 2000 there has been over a 250% surge in commuter cycling in New York City.

Looking at the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD—the area from 60th Street to the Battery), employment, traffic levels and transit ridership all declined more sharply in the CBD than citywide in the wake of the financial crisis. As of 2010, traffic entering the CBD has returned to the pre-recession level, while employment and transit ridership have not. (Data for 2011 are not yet available.) Notably, after having been flat between 2003 and 2007, vehicular traffic using the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels from New Jersey decreased by 4.5% from 2007 to

2010, while traffic entering the CBD across 60th Street and from Brooklyn and Queens has been flat or slightly declining.

A comparison back to 2000 – the previous decennial census milestone – shows that overall transit use is up 10% citywide, including a nearly 9% gain for bus ridership in the outer boroughs, despite recent declines. Over the ten-year period, the peak citywide transit use was observed in 2008, prior to the effects of the recession. Citywide traffic is 1% lower than it was in 2000, with a similar trend for traffic outside the CBD. Traffic into the CBD has had a greater decline – over 5% – since 2000, with the lowest points in 2001 and more recently in 2008.

This fourth annual Sustainable Streets Index reviews traffic and transit trends in New York City, reports CBD traffic speeds based on taxi Global Positioning System (GPS) data, and reports indicators for eleven major projects involving changes in street operations. An extension of the taxi GPS section highlights the distance and path of taxi trips of similar travel time at various times of day and areas in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. A new section to the report profiles walking patterns for commute trips and other travel purposes throughout the city.

Highlights from the performance indicators sections are:

- Bus speeds improved by 15-18% while ridership gained 12% on the M15 line with Select Bus Service. With the addition of new bus and bike lanes on First Avenue and Second Avenue, cycling volumes rose by 18-177%, and crashes were reduced by up to 37%.
- Bus speeds along Livingston Avenue between Flatbush Avenue and Boerum Place improved by 12-14% following the extension of exclusive bus lane operation to 7 a.m.-7 p.m. on weekdays and implementation of signal enhancements.
- Travel speeds improved by 35% in the evening rush hour while crash incidence fell at Cramer



Square in the Bronx after the redesign simplified traffic movements and shortened crosswalks.

- The incidences of speeding on West 6th Street in Brooklyn were cut in half after the conversion of a surplus travel lane in each direction into a striped median, exclusive turn lanes and wider parking lanes.
- Total injuries from vehicular crashes decreased by 26%, and injuries to motor vehicle occupants by 65%, at Union Square after the one-way conversion of East 17th Street, lane reduction on Broadway, bike lane installation and creation of pedestrian plaza space and safety islands.
- Injuries to pedestrians from vehicular crashes decreased by 67% along East 180th Street between Webster Avenue and Boston Road following lane narrowing and installation of a center median, turn bays and high-visibility markings at crosswalks at Boston Road.
- 86% of merchants reported an increase in sales and 76% of merchants reported an increase in foot traffic during the Montague Street Weekend Walks when compared to other typical weekend summer days.
- The car sharing program in Lower Manhattan saw a reduction in parking impacts of 14% during weekdays and 68% during weekends.

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