Bikers Need a Lane

Imagine having to share a busy main road not just with cars but also buses and trucks while you are on a bike in the middle of these huge vehicles. It would be scary and dangerous, right? But you would have no other route because the sidewalk is congested with vendors and pedestrians. Well, this is what biking community members in Jackson Heights have to deal with every time they want to bike down Roosevelt Avenue, a main road in the neighborhood. Right now, in the neighborhood, there is a need for bike lanes for safety reasons and for convenience for people riding bikes. This paper will be explaining the history of Jackson Heights and how it has evolved showing the need for improvements in the neighborhood’s transportation due to the changing needs of the community. Through research, input from community members and looking into the transportation in the neighborhood, bike lanes would be a good feature on Roosevelt Avenue.

From 1917 to the 1940’s Jackson Heights had architectural buildings called Green Cops where there were community gardening spaces or also called lawns in the middle of the complex, so people could interact with each other and form a friendly community. This type of style soon changed due to the increase of immigrants interested in Jackson Heights so the demand for housing was way higher. Which lead to rentals and townhouses being built to satisfy the need for more housing in the neighborhood. Jackson Heights really was a Mosaic of culture, meaning each culture stands by itself but also comes together to be a community.

Since Jackson Heights got a bigger influx of people in the neighborhood, there needed to be transportation to handle the number of people there and surrounding areas. In 1917, on Roosevelt Avenue was built the elevated subway train station that could get people all the way to Grand Central Station and other locations in New York. Jackson Heights really turned out to be a hub of transportation with LaGuardia Airport being close by, a major subway station, truck routes driving through, bus stops all around the neighborhood and many street parking. Which lead me to what I saw was in need for Jackson Heights and was also a concern I saw. The need for bike lanes on a major road in Jackson Heights, Roosevelt Avenue.

I got the chance to ask some people that reside in Jackson Heights about the matter and the transportation in the neighborhood. I talked to this lady at a nail salon in the neighborhood who had just been in the neighborhood for over a year now and who came from Mexico with her family. I first asked about the traffic and transportation on Roosevelt Avenue. She replied quickly with very congested and unsafe at times. I found that a lot of people agree with a consensus of Roosevelt Avenue being unsafe for many reasons. For example, since there isn’t a bike lane on that major road, bikers must ride with the traffic or try the sidewalk which is also very congested at times making it unsafe and difficult if wanting to ride a bike.

The first leading reason for the need of bike lanes on Roosevelt Avenue is safety for bikers on this very congested road. When I first visited Jackson Heights, I witnessed a delivery boy just jump right into the traffic of the road and almost get hit by a truck. In the book, Bike Battles[[1]](#footnote-1), there was a quote by a Minnesota government official talking about a huge bike boom where biking has grown a huge amount over the years and how it needs to be acknowledged. He also said, “A MAJOR BICYCLE SAFETY PROBLEM EXISTS concerning the existing and increasing use of bicycles on the public roads.”[[2]](#footnote-2) How this problem could be fixed in Jackson Heights is by taking in the sidewalks a bit from each side, since they are pretty wide, and add bike lanes down the sides. Another safety precaution added to the road can be bike lane dividers with reflective paint, so cars can see the lane at night better as well.

The next reason bike lanes would be a good idea on Roosevelt Avenue is that the road is so congested with traffic. Bikers in this neighborhood have to keep up with the cars on the road and deal with being honked at for “being in the way”. In an article where they studied vehicle behavior on roads where they shared the road with bikers, it showed alarming results of dangerous situations. In this study, they found “Nearly 8% of the overtaking occurred when the drivers were distracted.”[[3]](#footnote-3) What this quote is stating is that drivers can get distracted easily, making accidents with people biking on the same road further dangerous. By adding a bike lane, it can reduce the number of dangers bikers have with having to ride with trucks and vehicles on the same road. Also, it can help with all the congestion on Roosevelt Avenue since people on bikes won’t be swerving in and out of lanes and between cars. People biking can go at their own pace in a bike lane instead of keeping up with traffic.

For the final reason to add bike lanes is that it’s a more sustainable way of transposition for the neighborhood. Jackson Heights is a transportation hub from the subway station, bus stations, truck routes and cars, but these are all not so eco-friendly to the environment. If we place a bike lane in the neighborhood, it will promote a better sustainable option for transportation in the area. The materials to make the bike lane could also be environmentally friendly by using recycled materials like recycled water bottles. In an article about environmental benefits of bike sharing, it mentions; “Bike sharing has great potential to reduce energy consumption and emissions based on its rapid development.”[[4]](#footnote-4) So bike lanes would help not just the community members in the neighborhood but also can help the environment.

Some challenges and concerns that I heard and see are mainly about safety on Roosevelt Avenue. We can put up lane dividers to ensure the safety of the lanes, so drivers can’t use the lanes in any way. I also heard the problem of there not being enough light on the street so putting more street lights could also help with safety issues. Another thing, I want to do is to place some bike racks on the sidewalks to welcome more people to bike and make use of the new lanes. And if in the future more people want to bike because of the new lanes, some Citi bikes for rent could be placed in the neighborhood and more bike lanes on other streets in the neighborhood could be placed.

In conclusion, I noticed a need in Jackson Heights and felt like placing bike lanes down Roosevelt Avenue would be a great improvement in the community in many ways. By adding bike lanes down a congested road where bikers must be included in the hazard of riding with vehicles, it could help people feel safe about actually riding a bike. I also think it could help with the congestion on the road and promotes sustainability for an alternative way of secure transportation.

Bibliography

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