



Can Bloomberg Ride?

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When the MTA's lame contract offer created a situation where the Transport Workers Union threatened to bring the city to a standstill back in late 2002, Mayor Bloomberg, a subway rider, said that he would ride a bike to work - as if it were just that easy. While I was glad that the MTA and the TWU hammered out a last minute deal, I think Mayor Mike missed a great opportunity to learn how dangerous New York's streets are to cyclists. Maybe if he had, he would have understood why the cyclist community (one estimate is that 120,000 people in NYC cycle to work) has been demanding safer conditions and taking part in Critical Mass rides despite a year long harrassment campaign since the Republican Convention.

This policy does not make any sense in light of other good transportation policies that many think the Mayor may seriously consider, like tolling the East River bridges or congestion pricing traffic during peak hours. Both of these proposals would shift many people to mass transit, where many subway and bus lines are operating at full capacity and overcrowding during rush hour is rife. Something has to give for congestion pricing to work.

Encouraging Cycling in NYC by making it safer (real bike lanes!) and providing more parking facilities is one way to reduce overcrowding. Manhattan should be a cyclist's paradise - it's flat, compact, has broad streets and avenues, a relatively young and physically fit population. But instead we yield all the precious street space to moving and parked cars, many of which only have one occupant.

Other ways to reduce transit overcrowding will be to increase service, build more subway lines, like the [2nd Avenue line](#) and better surface transportation like the Bus Rapid Transit which could have greatly increased capacity and speed than the snail's pace of the current bus system.

I also hope that Mayor Bloomberg will consider some other worthy ideas like the [vision 42](#) idea to make 42nd Street a destination instead of a traffic nightmare and revise the city's building code to increase the energy efficiency of the city's housing stock.

I truly hope that Bloomberg uses his new mandate to make some of the politically hard but

necessary choices to make the city more sustainable and livable for future generations, but we need to keep the noise high on these issues to make sure they are addressed.

I saw a great list of 20 big ideas for the mayor to consider over at [City Limits](#), including 3 that really fit with making the city more sustainable:

#1 Put tolls on the East River bridges.

Charging vehicles to cross the city-owned Queensborough, Williamsburg, Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges may be politically dicey, but it would bring an estimated \$800 million a year in additional revenue to the city while easing traffic and air pollution. The mayor should also consider congestion pricing--using toll booths and mounted cameras to charge drivers for using streets that are already badly gridlocked. When London introduced congestion pricing in 2003, charging \$8 to enter the city core during peak hours, traffic dropped 25 percent--and the metropolis generated roughly \$120 million in its first year.

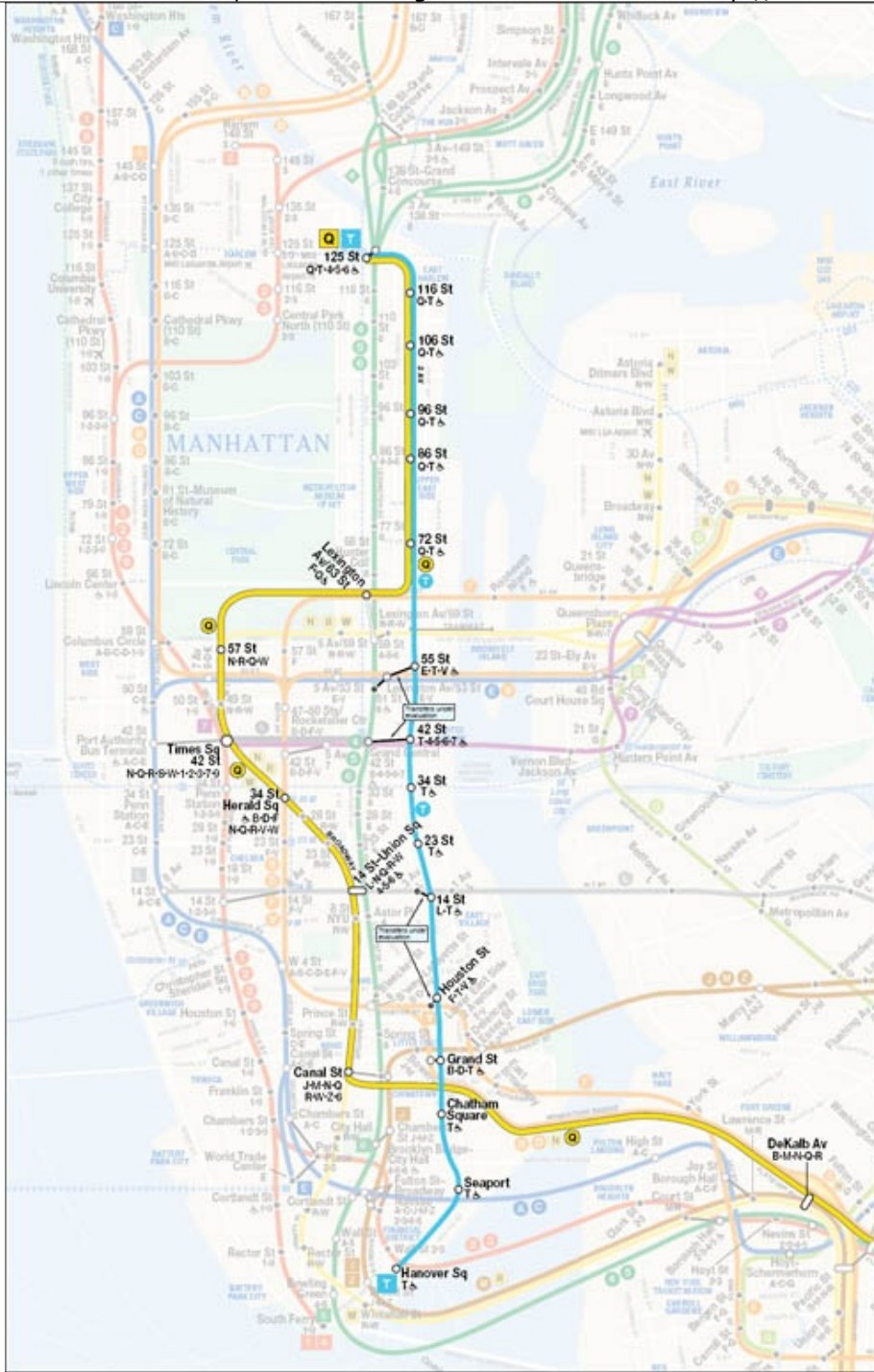
#13. Make street safe for cyclists

With gas prices soaring and traffic snarling, it's no surprise that 120,000 New Yorkers bike every day. What is surprising is just how much danger the city expects cyclists to endure. Riding up the most heavily trafficked bridges, for instance, requires riders to maneuver across highway ramps and six lanes of traffic, dodging potholes left and right. We should follow Toronto's lead and conduct a formal study of bike fatalities, identify trouble spots and work to fix them. In the meantime, we could emulate Chicago and start aggressively ticketing cars that park and idle in on-road bike paths.

#14. Bring fresher food to the `hood.

Many of the city's poorest neighborhoods lack good, fresh produce, and their residents are plagued with poor health, in part, as a result. Though the city added 14 farmers' markets in the last year alone, they're still far more common in affluent neighborhoods than poor ones. The mayor should make expansion in low-income neighborhoods a priority, and put wireless food stamp terminals at every market.

Map of new 2nd Avenue Subway Line



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